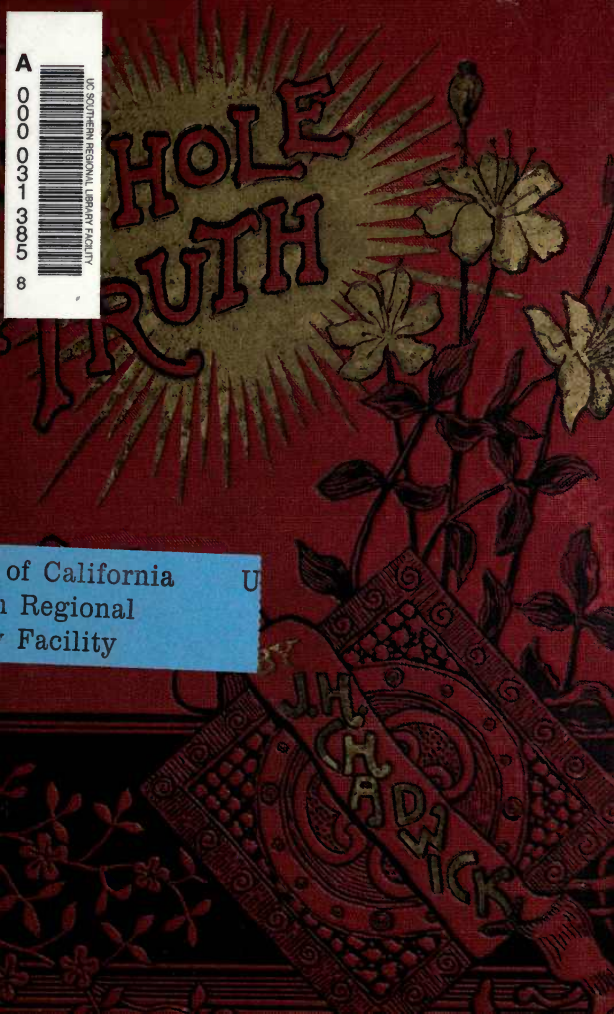

A
000 031 385
8
UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
of California
n Regional
Facility

Bought at
BERTRAND SMITH
140 Pacific Ave.
LONG BEACH,
CALIFORNIA

THE WHOLE TRUTH

THE WHOLE TRUTH

A NOVEL

BY

J. H. CHADWICK

"He that trusts in a lie shall perish in the truth."

CASSELL & COMPANY, LIMITED
739 & 741 BROADWAY, New York

COPYRIGHT,

1887,

By O. M. DUNHAM.

Press of W. L. Mershon & Co.,

Rahway, N . J.

TO

A. A. HAYES, JR.,

WHO HAS ALWAYS BROUGHT ME

GOOD LUCK.

2061854

THE WHOLE TRUTH.

CHAPTER I.

"The fruit of dreamy hoping, is waking—blank despair."

IT was a raw windy day in that disappointing season known to mortals as spring. Cold, gray waves, flecked with foam, came sullenly plashing against a shore edged with half-melted snow. Some ferryboats, their smoke beaten downward by the driving rain, steamed across the Bay as if in haste for shelter; a deeply-loaded coasting schooner came flying toward the Narrows with an anxious look of wishing herself in out of the storm; and only one strong boat, with a pilot's number on her reefed mainsail, beat in against the wind with a business-like air, as if there were a pleasure in the battle against wind, tide, storm, and fate, whichever won in the end.

Some such ideas as these crossed the mind of Jane Harding, as she stood at a window,

watching the storm. She had not been bold to oppose and conquer in her own life, but her admiration for all daring and heroic qualities was so great, that she imagined herself to possess them, and now took some pleasure in comparing herself to the brave pilot-boat, or, better still, to a stately steamer, which came steadily onward in the teeth of the gale, without any of the tacks and swerving by which even the pilot bowed to the powers of the air. For of all dreams of her youth, girlhood, and womanhood, this was the chief—to yield to none, to rule all around her, conquering and reigning by force of the charm, character, and intellectual powers which she believed herself to possess in fullest measure, but which she as yet had no opportunity to exercise. In fact, her life, instead of having been shaped by any will or impulse of her own, had been molded for her, in a way scarcely corroborating her estimate of herself, and now that freedom had at last come to her, she was somewhat at a loss how to use it.

The only child of an uncongenial marriage, Jane's youth had been one of disappointment

and bitter brooding, even from an age when few children suspect the existence of sorrow. Trouble had begun over her very name; her father, a talented, weak man, who had married for money a narrow and unintellectual woman some years his senior, finding his poetic suggestions at variance with the determined will against which both father and child were to beat themselves in vain. Mrs. Harding had promptly chosen the name of Jane, from no special preference, but as an expression of the instinct of opposition, the abiding purpose never to yield.

She was a woman who enforced compliance in the most trifling things, by the sure and simple method of making herself so unutterably disagreeable that, for very peace sake, all the world gave way before her. If she found herself in the wrong, as often happened, nothing was easier than to place herself in the right, by declaring in the next breath that she "had never said any thing of the kind," thus cutting the ground from under her antagonists' feet, and leaving them, breathless, helpless, and doubtful of their own opinion. In such an

atmosphere Jane had grown, deprived of the best privileges of childhood: the belief that all grown people were good, the ignorance of ill-will and evil speech. Mrs. Harding's love for her only child took the form of an unreasoning jealousy of her husband's influence; his, that of a tender, minute, but somewhat malicious solicitude, and between the exactions of both, the child had soon learned to steer her way with the dextrous tact of the weak—anxious, for her own sake, to offend neither.

Husband and wife agreed, for a wonder, in wishing their clever child to be highly educated, but, of course, differed radically as to the means to that end. As the holder of the purse, Mrs. Harding had the choice of the governesses and masters who were to direct Jane's studies, but her advantage ended here. She was a self-absorbed woman, busy over her household and business affairs, her own dress and Jane's, and the thousand-and-one pre-occupations of a *malade imaginaire*. Mr. Harding was an idle man, having given up at his marriage all the baseless dream-fabrics of his ambition, and now his days were free to devote to his daugh-

ter, establishing his influence over her and becoming first in her heart. As she grew, she developed tastes and traits which delighted him, as off-shoots of his own best powers, with the addition of a force of character which gave him brilliant hopes for her future; eagerly he encouraged her intellectual progress, eagerly inculcated an ambition akin to his own. The dream of a future in which she was to shine and to triumph, an epitome of all women who had ruled men's hearts by divine right of the perfection of their womanhood, was dwelt upon, without a suspicion of the little leaven of his own weakness which was to deny and nullify all their aspirations.

Sometimes, it is true, Mr. Harding was a little doubtful on the point of the physical beauty necessary to this programme, observing Jane's utter lack of the rosy, rounded charm of childhood—but he was artist enough to recognize, in the angularity of tall and ungainly girlhood, promise of the stately and nobly proportioned woman.

So Jane grew, between the checks, snubs and relentless criticism which made up Mrs.

Harding's idea of judicious training, and the flattering fondness of her father; intellect trained and matured, manners perfected, heart, soul, principle, ignored and neglected. And on her eighteenth birthday, with a dreadful suddenness, Mr. Harding was taken away.

There had been the usual dissensions in the unhappy household: Mr. Harding urging that Jane was now qualified to appear in society and begin her career of conquest. Mrs. Harding disliked society, thought Jane would lose nothing by waiting, in short, could not bring herself to yield to a wish of her husband. And one night, after a discussion more acrimonious than usual, Mr. Harding fell dead in his dressing-room.

Jane's grief was terrible, and in its loneliness, Mrs. Harding's mild lamentations seeming to her the tokens of an equal sorrow, her heart turned to her mother, as it had never done before, uniting them for a time by a tender tie.

They went abroad; traveling a great deal, seeking no society, making no friends, isolating themselves from their kind, yet becoming, year

by year, less and less to each other; exactions on one side and a somewhat ostentatious submission on the other, having taken the place of the softened feelings, which, in the first days of their grief, seemed to promise happiness to both.

Mrs. Harding's health was supposed to have failed, and she had grown peevish, exacting, imperious, unreasonable and violent, by quick gradations; until one day, when five years had somewhat dulled Jane's grief, and she felt the desire to carry out long-cherished plans, the girl, now a woman, awoke to the knowledge that she was the slave of a nature which she had been used to consider inferior to her own. And chafe as she might, enslaved she remained, bound to her mother's side, not by the chain of filial affection, nor even of duty, but because she was penniless. Mrs. Harding was liberal with money's worth, bestowing dress, jewels and luxuries upon her daughter with a lavish hand—but of actual money she dealt out infinitesimal sums, of which she demanded a strict account.

And now began a life which was torture to

such a nature as Jane's. Ambitious, vain, craving society, gayety, conquest, she was doomed to a wandering existence in search of "quiet," and "bracing air"; to winters in lonely Swiss *pensions*, in the society of a few very poor old maids or widows, and elderly poverty-stricken men; to summers in retired sea-side places in Wales, or in the dignified seclusion of lodgings at some English or German Bath. In such a life one makes few friends, and the advances made to the widow with her grave, discontented daughter, were avoided or repulsed, until they were practically alone in the world. Jane wore an air of outward submission, carefully tutoring her countenance that it might show no traces of sullenness. Inwardly she rebelled furiously, cursing her fate, and longing, yearning, agonizing, for the life she had worked to fit herself for, and which, even now, she would not acknowledge to be out of her reach. She read and dreamed her days away, keeping up with the world with a fierce eagerness, by means of newspapers, books and reviews; as if she felt that an instant's indifference, the least ignorance of what was

going on, would be tantamount to the giving up of all hope.

Rarely, very rarely, she touched the edge of her goddess's garment in an accidental meeting with some man or woman of the world, who would talk to her on equal terms, wondering at the spirit and eagerness which awoke in the eyes of this reserved girl. But usually she lived silently with her own bitter thoughts, eating her heart out with longings. Just to be as other girls were; to have a home and friends, to "come out," to wear ball-dresses, and dance, and flirt; and then—to excel, to outshine, to exceed, by holding the power which other women won only for a day.

But, alas! in these dreams her life was wasting, her youth was going from her, while the future was as far off as ever. It was always "next year"; next year Mrs. Harding would take her home and introduce her, or would take a house in London and have her presented. And meantime, she was no longer a girl, for whom these things were possible—she was twenty-five, twenty-seven, twenty-nine — she was growing old. She looked in the glass to

verify the terrible fact, but good hours, fine air, and simple food had kept in check the "going off" process. Her cheeks had a soft curve and a glow of health—her eyes a deeper, if less sparkling, brightness.

But in her struggle she could call no philosophy, whether Christian or heathen, to her aid. She endured doggedly, feeding her hopes with dreams, as of old, and for the dreams' sake keeping her face serene and unlined, her voice and manner true to the standard she had set up for herself. But deeper training of mind and heart she had none; she had read widely, in order to be able to converse—she was cultivated and well-informed—but it was a reading and a culture which left heart and soul starved into stupor or silence. Other dreams, of the romantic sort, such as visit most girls, had come to her now and then, adorning some very commonplace mortals with the attributes of heroes, but she had been so closely watched and so isolated that they were the merest shadows. And deep under all, of a firmer substance than the rest, was an ideal—of some one whose love should ennoble; whose favor aggran-

dize;—which unfulfilled, she purposed to inhabit her airy castles alone.

Mrs. Harding had been dead a year, and the phase of softened feeling which had followed her death, had now given way to Jane's habitual bitterness. She had spent this year in outward quiet; tasting the pleasure of freedom, sipping at the cup from which she presently meant to drink full and eager draughts. She scarcely knew yet what she should do with this new life—enjoy its liberty of action to the full, she supposed; but always that bitter sense of youth and opportunities lost came to mar the prospect. She should travel, of course, but she had already traveled so much that there was no exciting novelty in this idea, except the pleasurable thought of being bound by no considerations of time or economy, able to spend and choose according to her own lavish and luxurious fancy. But all this was spoiled for Jane by an uneasy consciousness that she was thirty years old, and unmarried! Just one of the indistinguishable crowd of maiden ladies who roam about the continent, some richer, some poorer, none with a claim to distinction

of any kind. Jane's observant eyes had not failed to note the difference in the experiences of a single woman and one who could write herself down Mrs. Anyone. And though her heart had been untouched, it was one of her bitterest complaints that she had never been afforded the opportunity of marrying.

Jane had occupied herself in these quiet days, very diligently, with the fortune her mother had left her, having soon intimated to her lawyer a wish to "understand every thing." Mr. Sandman, who had never had his own way in Mrs. Harding's lifetime, but was hopeful of it now, treated the wish as a mere whim, certain to wear itself out, until he found that the girl whom he had considered docile, if somewhat sulky, was a strong-willed woman, who, now that she had at last come into possession of her "own way" as well as her money, meant to have and enjoy both to the utmost. A thorough examination of her affairs, which had shown Jane that she was rich beyond her most extravagant need, concluded, she dismissed him with gracious firmness, and left him in a state of delusive security for a period of six months.

At the end of this time she had sent for him, appointing time and place in a way which irritated him by its decision, and briefly informed him that she wished all her real estate sold—all other investments, stocks, bonds, and what not, transferred; the whole sum of her fortune invested in *unregistered* U. S. bonds, and that at once.

Mr. Sandman was aghast! He remonstrated feelingly, he reasoned, he begged and implored; she would reduce her income one-half—it was folly, madness, crime. In vain; his frantic representations were met by Jane with an air of serene indifference, and served only to put him into a state bordering upon distraction; at which moment Jane gently said:

"I have made up my mind, Mr. Sandman, and I should be very sorry to be obliged to employ another lawyer;" at which Mr. Sandman had subsided.

The ensuing six months had been spent in carrying out Jane's commands to the letter; and whatever had been the impulse which had led her to adopt this course, she held to it unswervingly, and on this gusty April day she sat

at her window the possessor of an ample fortune so invested that she could take it from the safety vaults where it now lay, and carry it in a hand-bag, if it so pleased her, to the ends of the earth.

CHAPTER II.

"Where lies the land to which yon ship will go?"

IRRESOLUTION, inertia, an odd sort of dissatisfied content, had kept Jane Harding for the past eight months in the quiet boarding-house whose windows overlooked the Bay. She was within easy distance of the city, yet almost within sound of the sea and within the reach of its pungent salt breezes. All things that move on the surface of the waters delighted her, and she had them day by day under her eyes.

Her fellow-boarders had respected what they imagined to be the reticence of her grief, and she had been left much alone in her pretty, cheerful rooms, with her books and music.

Altogether every thing had suited her very well until to-day, when restlessness had taken possession of her, goading her to movement, and reminding her with a fresh thrill of delight that she was free to come and go as she would.

"I will go abroad," she thought, looking at an incoming steamer sliding swiftly through the gray water. "There I need not sacrifice to conventionality any longer. I can go to the opera as much as I like, or even lighten my mourning. Ah! if I were only not plain Jane Harding—what a position I might make for myself now! If only some man had been good enough to bestow his name upon me and then conveniently withdraw himself—if I were Mrs. Harding instead of *miss!* Never mind, there is much to be got out of life yet, though not all I want. I will go and seek *my* new world in the old."

One of Jane's standing grievances here recurred to her. "Why," she thought, "was I not taken into the world—thrown with such men as could have compelled my admiration and respect. Men of intellect and heart. But now it is too late: my day for that sort of thing has gone by; I am no longer young or attractive enough to draw to me such a man as I could love, and indeed I fancy I have quite outgrown the capacity of loving. No; my life must be self-sufficing. On no lover's arm shall I ever

lean or ever cross the hills into *that* new world."

All of which plainly shows that Jane had not yet learned the *fin mot* of a woman's heart.

She shook off with an effort the depression which was gaining upon her, and rising with a resolute expression, rang her bell: which was answered promptly, as the bells of peremptory people usually are.

"My bonnet and cloak, Annie," said Miss Harding, to the neat maid, who received the brief orders with a look of wonder. "And send for a carriage. Then you may begin to pack my dresses carefully. Put every thing I wear in two trunks. We sail for England on Saturday."

Annie was in tears when she reappeared with the heavy crape paraphernalia in which Miss Harding was accustomed to enshroud herself, but she quickly reconciled herself to the thought of traveling in the comfort and luxury with which her mistress was accustomed to surround herself, and she set about her task with alacrity.

In these days the preliminaries of a trip to

Europe are not very formidable. A brief visit to her bankers, one equally brief to the office of a steamship company, and then Miss Harding drove to Mr. Sandman's office, where she spent a longer time than seemed needful, in announcing her sudden decision' in convincing Mr. Sandman that there was no possibility of changing her decision, and in soothing the feelings wounded by her independence of action. For, though Jane Harding cared little at this time to win friends for herself, she had no idea of making unnecessary enemies. Mr. Sandman's doubts, remonstrances and expostulations having been put aside with as little shock to his self-esteem as was compatible with entire disregard of his advice, he at last accompanied Jane to a certain Safe Deposit Company, from whose vaults they carried away various boxes of tin and other materials. And this final portion of her preparations having been attended to on the morning of the second Saturday in April, Jane found herself, in the afternoon, sailing down the Bay on the same steamer which she had watched, five days before, battling

her way into port in the teeth of wind and tide.

It was a beautiful spring day; the land they were leaving was most fair, the ocean, stretching wide before them, sparkled and smiled in the sunshine; the crisp, rushing wind helped them on their way, and Jane's heart leaped up with exultation as they sunk the land and drove steadily eastward. Her plans were vague—even now she had no idea of how she should shape her future life, but it was a beginning of action—for the first time in her life she was doing as she would, exulting and uncontrolled. That night the delight of motion and freedom, the mighty forward rush of the splendid vessel, and her independence sufficed her. But by the next day she began, as her habit was, to observe the men and women around her, theorizing, criticising, conjecturing about them. It was an old-time amusement of the days when Mrs. Harding had forbidden her making "promiscuous acquaintances," and she smiled to herself as she remembered that now she was free to accept any attention offered her, to make such advance

as her fancy prompted, to those who seemed congenial. Even now, however, she felt the strength of the cultivated reserve which had almost become second nature. She hesitated, reflected, decided that the moment had not yet come to break through it, and Jane's sea-voyage passed, as was usual for her, in unbroken isolation. The captain paid her a few duty courtesies, but when he found that the quiet dark girl in mourning did not care for games, declined introductions, was absolutely well, and amply provided with books, left her to herself with a grim wish that all women were as easily pleased and as self-reliant; and Jane resumed her quiet reading of human nature in and out of novels.

A certain pretty and pleasant-voiced widow, to whom all the gentlemen were very attentive, was the chief disturber of Jane's enjoyment in these meditations. She envied her the unreserved ease of her manners, the confidence with which she appealed to those about her. It was perfectly natural and proper for her to be traveling alone—she had received the freedom of society—"Whereas I," thought Jane,

"am too young to be knocking about the world alone, and too old to take a chaperone. Oh dear! I do think a widow is the most enviable of human beings!" And so returned to her usual morbid musings on her unsatisfactory lot in life.

It was a warm, cloudless day, the sea rather quiet; Jane, with her book, was cozily ensconced in a *chaise-longue* somewhat apart from her fellow-passengers. Mrs. Merriam, leaning on the arm of a handsome Irishman, one of her special squires, was doing a constitutional after the fashion of ladies at sea, staggering daintily about in her high-heeled boots, clutching at her escort's arm in prettily-feigned alarm at each regularly recurring lurch of the vessel, and pausing now and then to rest after these exciting experiences in sheltered corners where she could raise her soft eyes to her companion's face without having to screw them up from the sharp wind. Mrs. Merriam perhaps did not know that Major Limber was one of the latest and luckiest players in the smoking-room of an evening, and that his interminable games were never dry ones; perhaps she did not care. At

all events, his good looks, good manners, and wish to make himself agreeable, had tempted her to carry on a pronounced sea-flirtation with him, without, at the same time, neglecting any of her other admirers. Jane had often admired the dexterity with which the merry widow handled her scratch team, mere *compagnons de voyage* as they were, flattering, coaxing and gently persuading them into the way she willed them to go, and yet keeping the whip-hand of one and all; and she was now speculating with some amusement on the possible character of the late Mr. Merriam, and whether for the sake of being a widow, it were worth while to endure the misery of losing a man one loved, or to have endured many other miseries before being delivered from the presence of a man one didn't love. While still undecided upon this point, the steamer suddenly bethought herself to plunge her bow deep into a great green wave, at the same time kicking her frantically-revolving screw out of water, and producing a combination of erratic motions which gave Mrs. Merriam golden opportunities. She shrieked, clung to Major Limber,

and stumbling, sliding, and exclaiming, reached a chair by the side of a gloomy and neglected admirer just as Jane, cynically surveying the scene, and forgetting her own equilibrium, slid, chair and all, directly to the widow's feet, where the final heave of the ship deposited her on the deck, helpless in her mummy-like swathings.

Mrs. Merriam was eagerly cordial, full of pretty words of sympathy, but too helpless to do more than stretch out a dainty white hand and offer a jeweled vinaigrette. Major Limber it was, who, with eager helpfulness, lifted Jane to her feet, replaced her chair, and after her brief thanks to Mrs. Merriam, led her carefully to it, and restored her scattered belongings. The incident evidently appeared to Major Limber a good opportunity, for he lingered by her, politely indeed, but somewhat persistently —endeavoring to start a conversation, with such success as might fall to the lot of a traveler in a strange country of which he did not know the language.

To have been ignominously tumbled out of her chair upon the deck of a steamer and

picked up like a child by the first comer, was so intensely mortifying to a dignified woman like Jane, that she was for the moment almost speechless. Her deep-set gray eyes burned under their black brows, with what appeared to Major Limber like indignation; her replies to his cheerful and discursive remarks were brief and curt. Even Major Limber, under these circumstances, could but bow himself away, and rejoin the merry widow, unconscious of having aroused in Jane's heart the bitter thought that she had indeed out-grown all the powers of attraction of which she had dreamed herself possessed.

An absolutely opposite conclusion forced upon Jane by her next encounter with Major Limber, failed to take the sting from this reflection.

It was late afternoon, dinner was over, the scent of the green earth they were approaching was in the air. "To-morrow," said every one, "we shall be in the Mersey."

Jane, to whom it was a twice and thrice-told tale, was yet eager and excited, and sent Annie below for her glass that she might catch the

first star-like glimmer of Fastnet light in the darkening sky. Annie was timid of venturing on the slanting deck, and stood in the door of the companionway, while Jane, with her easy, practiced step, came forward to take what she had brought. Major Limber stood a few steps below, intently studying the bulletin of the days' run. He heard Jane's gentle word of thanks, Annie's "Yes, miss—are we nearly in, miss?" and turning, bestowed on Jane's bright face, flushed by the wind and animated by one of her rare smiles, a stare of unqualified admiration which that inconsistent lady was pleased to consider impertinent to the last degree. Illogical Jane, who, four days before, had felt, with bitter chagrin, that she was too old to be admired, now resented, with equal bitterness, the offered homage, and gave Major Limber a withering glance which affected him the less, in that it was by no means the first time in his career that he encountered it.

CHAPTER III.

"The guiléd shore to a most dangerous sea."

A FEW weeks in the soft, suave atmosphere of an English spring, restored Jane's serenity, replacing the haste and unrest which the American climate seems to foster, by an easy-going calmness and sense of well-being. She had traveled by a lingering, round-about way from Liverpool to Ross, and down the Wye, and so to Gloucester, not following any ordained tourist route, but turning aside, and ranging hither and thither in the pleasant spring days; following out old plans of the time when she had not been free, when she had heard of this and that which she longed to see, but had been forced to forego and content herself with the slow itinerary which suited Mrs. Harding's health and economical ideas. Now, forswearing guide-books, driven by every wind of impulse, by a line in a poem or an

allusion in a novel, she passed the months of May and June with a pleasure which made her feel young again.

On the moors, where the Brontë sisters lived and suffered, the first faint blush of the blossoming heather told that spring was come; in the midland valleys the ways were white with the May, and in every wooded place was a fragrant carpet spread, purple and golden, wherever violet and primrose could plant their tiny seeds. Jane explored many a delicious nook in her lingering, leisurely progress toward London; her erratic course and long delays protecting her from the usual continual meeting with one's late fellow-passengers, which is a drawback or a pleasure according as one regards it. To Jane, it would have been an unmitigated bore. Of course, she met traveling compatriots, as well as wandering English people, but no one whom she had ever before seen. Her ruffled plumes had been somewhat smoothed by the discovery that she was not absolutely without attraction to the male eye; and the thought that she was still young and handsome enough to need a duenna was very

pleasant to her. To overhear a haughty English beauty who had favored her with a prolonged stare, turn away to say: "What a striking looking woman!" had brought a glow of delight to her heart altogether disproportionate to the trifling nature of the remark. She bought more gowns and prettier ones, in London, in consequence of this speech, "wearing her rue with a difference" now that she began to believe in possible notice and admiration, and very well knowing how much good looks gained from tasteful and appropriate dress. The fascination of shops is not so irresistible when one is in deep mourning, and London, in the season, was not what Jane cared for just now; so the first of July found her at Alum Bay, contentedly riding a hired horse about the roads and over the downs. The wild seclusion delighted her at first, then she tired of it and moved to Cowes, where the bustle of fashionable life in which she had no part, disgusted her still more. She crossed to the mainland, tried Hastings, Eastbourne, Brighton; hated them, one and all, and finally, having half decided to go to a French sea-

place for the bathing, found herself, at the end of July, in Dover, awaiting a favorable day to cross. Miss Harding was by no means timid of the rough seas; no prudential considerations as to sickness, or her complexion, delayed her; but her rooms at the Lord Warden were comfortable, the day was wet and gusty—above all, she was free to change her mind, and she decided against crossing. The second day was perfect, but she was in no hurry, so she went for a walk, pleasantly vacillating as to her plans. She wanted a dog. Mrs. Harding had never allowed her to have one, and England was the best place to buy a dog. She thought she should like to own a fine horse, for she loved riding, and wished to choose a bathing-place where the surrounding country should be attractive; and again, surely England was the best place to buy a horse.

In this frame of mind, pacing along the Marine Parade, she noticed a tiny house nestling between cliff and road, daintily neat, its windows brilliant with flowers, and a placard of "lodgings" in blue on a white ground. A pretty, fresh-colored maid was feeding a bird

in the bow-window of the parlor floor. With the delight of a child in acting, unchecked, upon her impulses, Jane turned in at the gate, rang, and asked to see the rooms. She was met by the landlady, a small, meek woman, who, after a start of recognition and surprise, became humbly apologetic.

"Oh! is it you, madam?" she began; "but no! I beg your pardon—I mistook you for a lady who visited a lodger of mine; but I see it is not the same."

Jane felt interested; she graciously excused, and examined the rooms with lenient eyes; they were simple, neat and dainty, the terms were low, the landlady civil. Ten minutes later Jane, having engaged them for a week, emerged from the gate and went briskly back to the hotel.

There she found Annie in tears and full of grievances. "Not another day would she spend in this abominable country. Why had she ever left America, where even poor girls were treated with respect and no nasty officer-men hanging about to be so forward?" And so on, at great length,

until Jane gathered from her incoherent plainings that some one "not worthy the name of gentleman in any respect" must have kissed her in the corridor; and nothing her mistress could say would avail to appease her. Tired out at length, and indisposed, through previous similar experiences, to be very sympathetic, Miss Harding agreed with her that she had better return home at once. Annie, affronted, demanded immediate release, and Jane, with irritated promptness, had telegraphed for a berth, and put Annie into the train with a ticket for Liverpool and three months' extra wages, before she took possession of the new lodgings next day.

Irritated by the *contretemps*, and annoyed at having to move without a maid, Jane, having hastily unpacked a few trifles, set forth to try and walk off her angry mood. Before long the fresh air, the pleasant sights and sounds of the merry little place had driven away her ill-humor, and returning radiant and rosy from a brisk walk on the cliff, she turned her steps to the pier, toward which she saw the packet coming swiftly across the glass-green waves.

Human nature, standing secure on shore, can not help a malicious delight in seeing fellow-creatures wearing the hues and tokens of sea-sickness, staggering unsteadily down or up on insecure gang-planks. Jane was not the only one who watched the melancholy procession of limp women and men trying to look as if they had not suffered; the belles and beaux of the place crowded the pier, pacing up and down in groups of three or four after the excitement of the arrival had subsided. Jane saw the last passenger ashore, and still lingered, not walking, but watching the sailors and porters busy with the freight; all action had a charm for her, even when it was merely the exertion of rough physical force. It was almost twilight before she tired of watching the bustle of unloading, the hauling about of big boxes and bales, the huge horses which tramped to and fro drawing heavy trollies on a miniature track; the ship-people busy about a thousand and one things on the packet's deck. Two gentlemen, the last on the pier, walking slowly, arm-in-arm, looked intently at Miss Harding when she at last turned to go; one with admiring interest,

the other, whose face seemed familiar, with a bold glance of approval and a remark in unmodulated tones:

"By Jove, what a handsome girl!"

Jane, who valued signs of admiration as testifying that she was not so old after all, was nevertheless somewhat ruffled by this impertinence, flushing quite perceptibly, in that waning light of a summer evening which in England is never quite darkness. But as she walked rapidly homeward she forgot the annoyance in the gratification, and thought, with some pleasure, that she ought to have a chaperone.

"It will be a bore," she thought. "I hate a paid companion; they are both toadies and treacherous. It seems a pity, now, that I had not 'cultivated' Mrs. Merriam—though I did not like her—and placed myself under her wing. But I should not be as free, and I fancied I looked old enough. I am afraid I shall have to find some congenial matron or widow—almost an impossibility. How I wish I were a widow myself. It must be some one rich enough not to need me beyond a certain point, and yet easy-going enough to yield to my whims. Oh!

how I shall hate it! I dare say it was one of those very men who made love to Annie. I don't feel to need protection from them, but I suppose I do. Decidedly—" here Jane glanced over her shoulder and perceived that the taller of her admirers was following her—" Decidedly, I must have a duenna, since I am not a widow!"

CHAPTER IV.

"Oh! what a goodly outside falsehood hath."

THE disagreeable necessity of acquiring what Becky Sharp would have called a sheep-dog, forced itself upon Jane's notice very often within the next few days, and each time she shook it off with a growing distaste. One rainy morning she sat thinking on it, with a sense of dismay, less and less in love with the prospect of having a human clog hampering her footsteps, like a hobbled horse with a short chain, when her landlady's knock was heard at the door. Now the tribe of landladies in general was abhorrent to Jane, but this was such an inoffensive little woman, meek, pleasant-voiced and almost refined, that she had permitted in her an unusual degree of intimacy. On this occasion Mrs. Steele, having received the orders for dinner which were the ostensible cause of her visit, lingered in a manner which so obviously invited conversation that Jane laid

aside her book and asked a few indifferent questions. This was sufficient. Mrs. Steele quickly gratified Jane's anxiety as to her health, her success in letting lodgings, how dear coals were, and how difficult it was to find reliable lodgers, and then plunged into the subject of which her mind was evidently full.

"I beg pardon, ma'am,—miss, I mean," she began, "but perhaps you'll recollec' me takin' you for some one I knew the day you come here lookin' for rooms, until I see you better, and see you was a much older lady."

Mrs. Steele, having thus wounded Jane's susceptibilities as successfully as if she had been well-informed as to her sore points, paused for some sign of interest.

"I do remember something of the sort," said Jane, carelessly.

"Pore young thing! I should wish it had 'ave been, for I often wisht I knew what become of her. 'Twas a sad story."

"Pray tell it to me, Mrs. Steele," said Jane, reflecting that it was too wet a day for a walk, and that she was likely to have some dull hours. "You must often see strange things. Little

bits of romance, I dare say, come under your notice very often."

"You may say so, ma'am—miss," answered the gratified Mrs. Steele. "This was quite a year ago—*quite* a year, because I remember, I'd been a-havin' great trouble with the chimney-pot to this chimney, and the pore young man suffered awful with the smoke. He come here between the Fourth and the Fifth after Trinity, and I knew in a minute he were in trouble with his family; as handsome and elegant a young man as ever you see, with such beautiful brown eyes, and long lashes like a girl's, and the whitest hands! But very ill when he come, pale and languid like, and with somethin' a-preyin' on his mind. He'd sit in that bow, where you're sittin' now, ma'am, hours together, and doin' nothing but turn over some letters, and sigh. His servant, as was as decent a body, for a man-servant, as need be, would try and coax him to go out, and tempt him in the eatin' line, but all was as if 'twas no use—nor not meant to be. So at last he took to his bed, and was days there before he would let Phillips—that was his name—go for a doctor.

I heard him persuadin' him. Mr. Grandison, sez ee—Grandison was his name, 'It's a dooty you owes, sir, to yourself and also to others.' But Mr. Grandison wouldn't hear to it. Then Phillips, he wanted to send for some of the fambly, but he wouldn't listen to that neither. 'My fambly,' he says, 'turned me off; they robbed me of *her*, and now they shall lose me too.' Well, not to be too tiresome, miss," went on Mrs. Steele, drawing a long breath, "Mr. Grandison got worse and worse. A doctor was called and at last he says, 'If Mr. Grandison has any friends,' he says, 'send for them.' Phillips shook his head and said he misdoubted they wouldn't come, but he wrote, however; and surely no one ever come, for Mr. Phillips says to me—says he, 'I knowed they wouldn't, Mrs. Steele.' My heart ached for him, miss, and him lyin' there so low and so handsome. Well, at last, we give up hope, Phillips and me; he was conscious, but so weak and low; and one day I was sittin' with him, and Phillips a-havin' of some dinner, the faithful creature, as had scarcely eat or slept, when there was a knock at the door, and that Eliza, which is as stupid now

as the day she was born, opened it, and before I could hush her over the banisters, the door opened and in walked a lady as like you, ma'am, as if born your sister—only much younger. She ran to him and kneeled down by the bed and cried out, and he stretched his poor, weak hand to her and said, 'My darling —so you've come at last!' I rushed down to Phillips, for I was that frightened, and hardly knew whether an agitation would kill him. Phillips went up the stairs, two at a time, and me after him, but all was well. He was holdin' 'er 'and, and she kissin' him on the cheek and cryin' very soft.

"Phillips shut the door, but the lady didn't stay long, and he put her in a cab, and stayed with his master from that until the end. For he sank very fast after that, though he seemed peaceful and happy, but there was no savin' him, and before sunrise he was gone.

"The lady come again, next morning, alone, same as before, and in a hurry, and when Phillips told her his master was dead, her grief was awful. I made sure they had been married in secret, but when I taxed Phillips with

it, he laughed, and says—'No, 'twas his own sister, as had been forbid to come and see him on account of some bitter quarrel in the family, and had found him out by chance as they was passing through Dover.' And if you can believe me, ma'am, though they was in the place, and knew of the death through her, not one of them came to follow him to the grave, which Phillips and I was the only mourners. And such little things as he had, he left by his will to Phillips, his 'servant and only faithful friend,' as it said. Mr. Phillips told me a good deal about him after—a sad tale it was, them high families is so bitter, and the young man not to blame; which I'm sure he never was, for he'd the face of an angel. I've a picture of him Mr. Phillips gave me—I'll show it to you."

Mrs. Steele left the room; Jane, who had listened with increasing interest to the sad little story, was surprised to find tears in her eyes, but had carefully wiped them away before the landlady returned, carrying with her two photographs in pretentious and hideous velvet frames, and a well-worn news-

paper marked in blue pencil. Jane looked at the pictures with strange eagerness. What were this man's looks to her? Yet she felt curiously anxious that he should prove to be really a gentleman—the landlady's commendations not carrying much weight, as the taste which inspired them was probably incorrect. But the face which looked at her from the photograph fitted itself line by line to her fastidious ideal. The slight difference in the pose of the two pictures served to bring out different and characteristic beauties: in one, the fine brow and thoughtful eyes drew attention from the mouth and chin, whose lines, sensitive and exceedingly sweet, were fully revealed in the other. It was the face of a man of refinement, gentle instincts and much tenderness, with that sort of strength of character which is perilously near to obstinacy. The very boldness of the hand in which, under each picture was written the name of "E. St. George Grandison," revealed the lurking weakness of a nature at once headlong, headstrong and loving.

Jane, with whom Mrs. Steele, after a few

words of regretful praise, left the photographs while she went about her household affairs, studied the face intently, fancying she read all these meanings in the depths of the dark eyes and the curves of the handsome mouth. "Just the man," she thought to herself, "to make a rash marriage, quarrel with his family, and die broken-hearted and separated from both." She took up the paper and absently read the marked paragraph, which announced the death of "Eustace St. George Grandison, only son of Everard Temple St. George Grandison, of Danesfort, Yorkshire, and Temple Grandison, Sussex, Esq.," who had died at 21 Marine Parade, Dover, August 20, 1879, in the twenty-seventh year of his age. The mystic letters R. I. P., which concluded the notice, made her aware that he or his family had been Catholics. Further search, pursued in a very abstracted manner, resulted in the discovery of another paragraph, not marked, alluding to the recent death of an estimable young gentleman of a distinguished family, under peculiarly sad circumstances, and while estranged from his family. "We are permitted to state," went

on this notice, "that in the circumstances of this estrangement, now of some two years' standing, nothing in the least discreditable attaches to the late gentleman or his eminent family."

Rather a curious sort of a quarrel, thought Jane, in which no blame attaches to either side. She glanced over the rest of the paper, a mere local chronicle, absently noting the date; then folded it, yawned, looked out at the wet walks and heavy sky, and deciding that the day could be no worse, and showed no signs of being better, she equipped herself for a rainy walk. Jane always thought more readily a-foot, and whatever were her reflections during this walk, she came in fresh, animated and excited, announcing to Mrs. Steele, whom she met in the passage, her determination to remain another week in her lodgings. The dull day, and the dreary wash of the gray sea on the beach, seemed powerless to affect her spirits; she was busy, interested, even gay, all the evening, pausing now and then for a glance at the pictures which Mrs. Steele, touched and pleased at her interest, had left in her posses-

sion. The week was a pleasant one to Mrs. Steele, no less than to Jane; never had the worthy little woman had so kind, considerate and generous a lodger. Many a pleasant little twilight talk did they have, in the course of which the story of Mrs. Steele's whole life was unfolded, in reply to Jane's sympathetic questions, together with a mass of miscellaneous information anent the long procession of lodgers who had preceded Jane, among which were necessarily some items concerning the dead Mr. Grandison. Mrs. Steele, won by the flattery to her powers of narration implied in such absorbing interest in her tale, willingly repeated every slightest incident relating to the young man's short stay in his last earthly lodging; so that at the end of the week Jane found herself in possession of facts sufficient for the erection of a very pretty and tolerably correct theory of the poor fellow's character and habits. So much did Jane's interest in him—whose intensity puzzled Jane herself for a time—please soft-hearted Mrs. Steele, that she at last begged her lodger to accept one of the treasured photographs of Mr. Grandison,

as the only adequate expression of her devotion. Jane, when the suggestion was made, was startled to find herself blushing like a girl, and accepting it with as much agitation as might have been caused, had poor Grandison offered the gift in person. She was very grave and thoughtful for some hours after this; her usual brisk walk seemed for a time to change the current of her thoughts. But she relapsed into gravity again in the evening, slept but little that night, awoke early next day—her last day in Dover, and the first morning hours were spent, silently, in the bow-window, her eyes fixed intently on the sullen-looking water, thinking so intently that her face became almost gray and old. It was almost noon when she came out of this reverie. She was to leave by the next day's boat, and had many preparations to make. A look of relief and resolve came into her face as she put on her bonnet with its vast crape veil, contemplating herself attentively in the glass.

"I will do it," she said aloud. "It is a harmless deception, and affects no one but myself."

CHAPTER V.

"Here do I choose, and thrive I, as I may."

JANE'S morning walk was not, as usual, along the chalk cliffs and in search of pretty country nooks, but to the chief shopping-street of Dover. Here she entered a newspaper office, where she asked for a number of the paper which must have been previously ordered, for it was promptly produced. Thence she found the way to a linen-draper's, where, having invested in several pairs of black gloves, she bought some yards of a special kind of mourning ruching, which consists of a sort of puff of crimped double tarletan. Various other little arrangements were made for her journey during this walk—a deck cabin taken on the packet, and a fly ordered to convey her boxes.

The rest of the day was devoted to her packing, which she found rather tiresome without a

maid, and at the very last, just before bedtime, Jane sat down and inserted in the front of her crape bonnet a narrow strip of the crimped tarletan, the effect of which, when she tried on the bonnet, she found both becoming and satisfactory.

Mrs. Steele was really sorry when the morrow came, and the fly bore Jane and her boxes to the boat, which she presently saw dipping and plunging through the short channel seas ; but then it was certain that Miss Harding had never taken so much trouble to be agreeable in her life before, and it would have been hard had she not succeeded.

Jane's ticket had been bought for Paris, but on leaving the boat at Calais, she passed from the Custom-House into the street, and calling a cab, was driven with her luggage to a hotel.

In leaving Dover and for a great part of the crossing, Jane had kept her veil down closely about her face and over her bonnet ; but now, upon alighting at the hotel, it was thrown back, revealing her face and fair hair half encircled by the white puffing, and causing madame la pro-

prietaire, looking out at the small glazed windows of the Bureau, to say to herself : "Bien-voilà une belle veuve anglaise, allons à sa ren, contre." And sallying forth with bows and smiles, she herself conducted "madame," with a most engaging cordiality, to the apartment which the latter bespoke, expressing in remarkably pure and fluent French, a wish to repose after her trip.

Jane's usual self-possession had not deserted her, but there was a repressed excitement in her manner which outward events did not seem to justify. When she had ordered a simple dinner and said that she did not wish her luggage brought up, as she should stay but one night, intending to take an evening train to Paris next day, she was left alone, and in the course of half an hour, this appearance of agitation had given way to an air of quiet resolve. And an hour later, when, with her dinner appeared an obsequious waiter, who begged that madame would favor them by placing her name on the visitors' book, it was with no sign of hesitation that Jane took the pen, dipped and proffered by the courteous Frenchman,

and wrote, in a bold, legible hand "Mrs. E. St. George Grandison, London."

When the waiter, with more bows, accurately adjusted to the value of the piece of money placed upon the book for his acceptance, had gone, she found herself blushing, cold, and trembling violently, as one who had faced some crisis.

But absolute truth had not been a goddess much served in the Harding household, and it was only a sense of adventure and novelty, with some faint thought of her temerity, which had quickened Jane's healthy pulses. She sat a moment thoughtful, then, rising, repeated to herself: "It is merely a harmless deception," and dismissing all further misgivings, entered into her new rôle of widow, with zest and enjoyment.

The first occupation of her evening was to destroy every note and letter, few as they were; every scrap of paper or other memorial which could in any way connect her with the person once known as Jane Harding. This done without much trouble, for a few brief business notes from Mr. Sandman and some

milliners' and jewelers' documents made up the whole of her correspondence, she printed, in a neat hand, several card-board labels with the address "Mrs. E. St. George Grandison, Hotel Louis-le-Grand, 2 Rue Louis-le-Grand, Paris," choosing an hotel at which she had never staid nor visited, but which she knew by repute as quiet and comfortable. These she caused to be affixed to her four trunks, hitherto distinguished only by three broad red stripes after the fashion of continental trunks—by a porter as obsequious as the waiter had been. This done, she went to bed, and slept the sleep which perfect digestion and plenty of money generally insure, without reference to more sentimental and intangible influences.

In all her travels Jane had never spent many hours in Calais, so, the next day being fine, she proceeded to "do" the few sights—the castle, the "plage," and a church or two, ending, in the approved way, by a tour among the shops.

Jane's money had not been long enough at her own command for her to be soon weary of the delights of spending, and it must be

owned that she gained less genuine enjoyment among the sights of Calais, than she did in the shops, where she bought a vast number of brushes, mirrors and other trifles in ivory, all of which she ordered to be adorned with the letters "J. St. G. G."

The midsummer weeks which Jane now spent, not unpleasantly, in Paris, were devoted to the replenishing of her wardrobe with all the dainty imaginings which the genius of a French man-milliner could devise to mitigate the severity of widow's mourning; to the acquirement of the thousand and one trifles which a woman never knows she needs until she sees them in the shops, when they are immediately realized to be indispensable; and, finally, to engaging a maid.

It was hardly the time of year to be completely successful in the latter quest; but in these days every thing seemed to come at Jane's wish. A young English bride had died at one of the watering-places, and her maid, an experienced person, accustomed to travel, and highly recommended, passing through Paris on her way home, fell under Madame Berthon's

notice, who was eagerly aiding *la charmante* Madame Grandison in her search. Jane was a little shy of English people, being not at all sure but that she might encounter some one who knew all about the poor young fellow whose names she had appropriated; but after an interview with the invaluable Pritchett, she was so well satisfied with the maid's manner and appearance that she decided to write to the Duchess of Saintsbury (mother of the poor little bride) for the further information which Pritchett desired her to have. The note, almost the first Jane had had occasion to write, since, in Napoleonic style, by the grace of her own good pleasure, she had become Mrs. Grandison, was soon written. In the others, mere business communications, she had had no occasion to use her Christian name, but now, having written "yours faithfully," she held her pen suspended and reflected on this question of her signature. Jane Grandison. She liked the old-fashioned, dignified sound. She had no fancy for the romantic names which bless the girls of the present day; in Gladys, Gwendolen, or Juliet, lay no temptation for her to dis-

card her own. Should she also retain her own cognomen as a middle name, or would this invite inquiry and lead to discovery? She wrote a signature in several forms: Jane Grandison, Jane Harding, Jane Harding Grandison, Jane St. George Grandison, on a stray bit of paper, without being entirely satisfied with either. Then, suddenly remembering that a Scotch great-aunt, long since dead, for whom she might have been named, had called the name Jane, while writing it Jean, she felt that this was a difference great enough to gratify her wish for an entire change of identity, without exposing her to the risks and perils of choosing and accustoming herself to an altogether new appellation. A knock was heard at the door, she hastily pushed the bit of paper with the experimental signatures under the blotter in the table-drawer, and called "Entrez," while signing her note "yours faithfully, Jean St. George Grandison." The Duchess of Saintsbury's reply was most satisfactory. Pritchett was engaged, and entered upon her duties immediately, being much pleased with her new serv-

ice—for Jane was a pleasant-tempered mistress—and not a little edified by the evidences of devotion to her late husband, which Jane betrayed, without ever speaking of him. Like most of her class, Pritchett's idea of an absorbing grief was one which kept the memorials of a loss constantly before one, and her mind could not grasp the madness of sorrow in which the young husband of her late mistress longed to rid himself of every thing which could remind him of his lost darling. She was greatly pleased, for reasons of her own, when Jane bought a beautiful gray thoroughbred mare which had been Lady Hermione's, at the same time employing Girth, an old fellow-servant, for a groom. But she contrasted her late master's way of mourning disadvantageously with Jane's, as evinced by her constant use of a gentleman's dressing-case, with a crest and the letters "E. St. G. G."; her wearing a watch with the same inscription, and the presence on her dressing-table of a silver photograph frame, with securely locked doors bearing the same mark in raised gold letters, and containing, as she once had the opportunity of assur-

ing herself, the portrait of a handsome man who signed himself Eustace St. George Grandison.

With all her experience, Pritchett was incapable of such a flight of fancy as to dream that the dressing case had been bought, second-hand, at Dover, the watch in Paris—both marked, at a little shop in the Rue Taitbout, with the initials and a crest which was found in the "Landed Gentry," along with other valuable information, opposite the name of Everard Temple St. George Grandison.

CHAPTER VI.

"Stay the very riping of the time."

IT now becomes necessary to decide by which name the chief personage of this history shall be known in the ensuing pages. The *ci-devant* Jane Harding, now self-styled "Mrs. E. St. George Grandison" is not to be denied the right, common to every woman, of doing precisely as she pleases, though she thereby places her historian in a strait betwixt truth, courtesy and convenience. Every one knows, however, how difficult it is to follow, in history or fiction, the fortunes of any personage, doomed, either by exalted station or by considerations of expediency connected with the majesty of the law, to a more or less frequent change of name. Every conscientious reader has weltered in a slough of perplexity, in the endeavor to recognize that "Henry, surnamed Bolingbroke, Duke of

Hereford, son to John of Gaunt, afterward King Henry IV." or to trace that fascinating person of indifferent morals, Barry Lyndon, through a career involving the use of so many aliases. Few have been the minds sufficiently perspicacious to know, in the Duke of Omnium of the "Prime Minister" the impetuous "Planty Pall" of "Can You Forgive Her" and "Phineas Finn," or to meet as an old friend that Prince de Moncontour whom we had loved as the Vicomte de Florac, in the pages of the "Newcomes."

Taking these things into consideration, an endeavor will be made to reconcile truth, courtesy, and convenience, a task not so difficult in this nineteenth, as in previous centuries, while our language remained in a less flexible state. A compromise will be effected, whereby the lady in question, being called "Jean," will be flattered, the reader's convenience consulted by the actual identity of name, and the writer's conscience soothed by the same device which does away with the hopeless entanglements caused by speaking of Miss Harding or Mrs. Grandison, according as

the lady is encountered in public or in private life.

These preliminaries disposed of, the events of the fourteen months succeeding Jean's brief midsummer visit to Paris, may be at once related.

It was not in Jean's nature, having once decided upon a plan of action, to spoil it by precipitancy, though, as has been seen, she could act promptly and decisively on occasion. Having learned the lesson of patience very effectually in her early life, she was now prepared, after the one great step, to let things go their own gait, ripening her purposes as nature ripens fruit, by imperceptible degrees. She had very well defined ideas of what she meant to do; but first, she wished to see her way absolutely clear before her, to feel herself so at home in her new rôle, that she could make no mistakes in it; she had, therefore, determined to spend the time in comparative retirement, until two full years should have elapsed from the date of Mr. Grandison's death. By that time, she assumed, it would be perfectly correct for her to cast off her

crape, and appear in that style of dress known as "half-mourning," which affords the most unlimited opportunities for striking and becoming toilets.

Jean knew very well what pleasant acquaintances, what valuable friendships, are to be formed in that easy-going delightful life of Hotel and Pension, of *Bad* and *Spa*, of winter cities and summer "plages." She knew too, how the best English people, who at home would scarcely open their exclusive doors to the pleadings of the most persuasive letter of introduction, are, on the Continent, singularly vulnerable; accepting people, as it were, at their face value; and once the outworks carried, Jean knew that there is no friend so faithful, through thick and thin, as an English friend. Then, too, she soon confirmed what she had believed before, that a handsome wealthy *widow* of thirty-three or four, was sought, flattered, courted and caressed, where a single woman, unattached, of the same circumstances, would be voted "dowdy," "odd" or "pushing," and quickly relegated to the position of a wall-flower.

Not wishing to enter at once upon the warfare of society, Jean gave up her plans for the sea-shore, and gratified her artistic tastes and an old dream, by setting herself, about the end of September, in a tiny apartment at Barbizon, near which quarters were found for her horse, and groom, and dog, a great white deer-hound, which she had, after all, bought in Paris.

Much as she would have liked it, all the proprieties forbade her dining at the *table d'hôte* at Sirons, among the enviable and jolly crew of artists who frequented that fascinating hostelry. But there was nothing to prevent her visiting the inn, to inspect the *salle* with its walls paneled with paintings of every size and style. In the quaint old room, with its high chimney-piece across one corner, whereon are laid the letters of expected and expectant guests, men living and dead, famous and unknown, have left their sign-manual. From the wainscot upward, the walls are covered with pictures and sketches of more or less merit and finish, tacked on hap-hazard and close together, forming the quaintest paneling; the ceiling

decorations are of a different style, and the only admiration they evoke is bestowed upon the ingenuity which succeeded in fixing them there. Along the walls of the outer hall are adornments less permanent,—liable indeed, to removal at the hands of a white-washer, in the shape of spirited sketches, caricatures, *jeux d'esprit*, executed with pencil, a bit of burned stick, or the ingenious adaptation of a few drops of coffee and a crack in the plaster. All these works of art Jean pleased herself by examining often; she had soon been taken into friendship by madame, and by Anastasie, who, though always in a hurry, could stay her little dog-trot long enough to communicate to Jean all the gossip of the place. Ravode, the dirty, black Caniche, who lay constantly at the glazed door of the *salle*, knew her step as she turned into the rough paved court; he and his confrères, no dirtier perhaps than he, but, being white, more ostentatiously so, had long ceased active hostilities toward the deer-hound, and only greeted Bor with hushed, lazy growls.

For reasons known to herself, Jean preferred to gather her information as to the distin-

guished company there assembled, from hearsay, rather than from observation. She took furtive peeps now and then at a certain tall artist with a crooked nose, whose portrait madame wished her to recognize in a mild smudge behind the door; at two young American girls, one of whom Anastasie characterized as "gamine, mais bien gentille," the other as, "une ange! madame!" at "the inseparables," as two young men—a tall and handsome, and a small, ugly one, were called. But she was careful to encounter them only in passing, to make as yet no advances to any one, and to leave "la veuve Anglaise," with her horse and her dog, as yet a vague and shadowy personality. And yet, how she envied them!

October had come; the off and on people, the French poseurs in astonishing feathered hats, with their tight-laced, high-heeled families, all the *va-et-vient* of English and American curiosity-seekers and artistic pilgrims, had gone. Only a sort of family party of artists, of several nationalities, remained; and these might be encountered perching upon ingeniously uncomfortable stools, or more securely

upon stones, working away diligently at some choice point of view. But it was already chilly enough for even these enthusiastic young men and women to sacrifice their sense of the picturesque and appropriate for the sake of warmth: Cardigans, wristers and mufflers became a sort of uniform, with red hands and cold feet, which necessitated a good deal of strong language and stamping about, interfering materially with sketching.

Now, too, the evenings closed in early; the merry artist-folk—passing in groups and couples under Jean's window—were lighted on their way to dinner by dim, twinkling lights in queer primitive lanterns, looted here and there in the country round; rickety brass affairs, mended with oiled paper, which might have lighted Watteau's ladies to their chairs, or iron "lanthorns" full of holes, with a thin bit of bone in place of glass. Their gay voices came up to Jean's ears as she sat solitary, and emphasized her isolation.

The two young Americans—who were ostensibly chaperoned by a heedless spinster with gray curls and glasses—passed three times a

day, laughing, singing, (whisper it) larking, along the narrow street, with its echoing high walls. How Jean envied them their youth, their art, their freedom! But then, Jean was morbid, and envied almost every one.

One night when they had gone by on their way to dinner, in an unusually hilarious mood, Jean could not resist the temptation to follow; an errand to Sirons was readily invented; she flung on her long cloak, called Bor, and stepped out into the cold purple twilight. A strange impulse came over her as she stood in the long street, with its blank walls and closed doors. Instead of going toward the inn, she turned into a side path, and in a few minutes reached the forest. There it was dark, only the lighter trunks of the close-crowding trees glimmered faintly on either hand; she went down a grassy ride, where her feet disturbed the fallen leaves and the wind caught and whirled them. Bor, flitting before her, was only an uncertain shape in the gloom, and among the trees over her head was uttered that soughing sound which is the inland answer to the voice of the sea. A strange mood, made up of regret and despair

and longing, took possession of her. She flung herself on the ground, among the roots of a great tree, and broke into bitter sobbing without knowing why—for had she not assured herself only that day that the way was now open before her to attain all she wished. The dog came and licked her cheek, standing beside her with inarticulate coaxing and comfort; and Jean, with whom such outbursts were rare, presently controlled herself, and, rising, turned her face resolutely toward the inn. Dinner was over by this time, but the young people were lingering still. As Jean passed the open door of the *salle* a fresh pang of envy contracted her heart. The dusky room glowed with firelight; some one was kneeling at the hearth, tending the roasting apples, which hung by strings from the high chimney-piece and twirled slowly before the blaze. Some one else was picking out a merry air at the shabby piano, while two or three fresh voices sang,

"Come lasses and lads,
Get leave of your dads!"

At the table the two young girls were still sitting, the elder taking ostentatious dainty

whiffs of a cigarette; the younger, her face hidden in her hands, resisting the teasing persuasions of a light-haired young man who assured her they were "all friends and would never tell."

Ravode's warning growl as Jean entered the outer room, drew all eyes to the door, and there was a little startled pause as she flitted by in her black cloak, with her white face and wild eyes.

"It is a Banshee! And which of ye, now, does she belong to?" she heard a voice say, whose nationality there was no mistaking.

"It is a warning!" added a second voice, very solemnly. "Ah! young ladies, if your mothers could see you now!"

CHAPTER VII.

"It is not the lie that passeth through the mind, but the lie that sinketh in and settleth in it, that doth the hurt."

BUT Jean had not come to Barbizon to indulge in heroics under the trees in the rain, nor to play Banshee to a party of young heedless creatures, whose merriment caused her an envious pang. She had a well-defined purpose in view, to which she held with the tenacity of her impulsive, obstinate nature, approaching it indirectly and sidelong, as it were. In her long wandering walks and idle moments spent at Sirons, she had picked up, partly through madame's talk and Anastasie's hints, partly by a sort of lady-like eavesdropping which she thoroughly justified, a good deal of information about different artists in and about Barbizon. Nor was she altogether unconscious of having attracted the attention of the artistic eye, as, either on foot, or mounted

on the beautiful gray mare, but always accompanied by the great white hound, she had crossed their paths here and there in the forest. The strong dramatic instinct which kept her continually posing to her own consciousness, was gratified by every glance thus bestowed upon her, and she felt a special pride in the success with which she appeared serenely to ignore all the admiring notice which afforded her such pleasure. It was not as her real self that she wished to be admired. The rôle she had chosen, the somewhat romantic personality of the widow, isolated, aloof, but doubtless charming, was that to which she wished to attract approving eyes.

In her own mind, Jean had, by this time, almost decided that one of two or three men then at Barbizon should paint her portrait, but the taste for intrigue had so grown upon her that she was now almost incapable of proceeding in a straightforward manner, and waited, with a spider-like patience, for any chance opportunity to help her formulate her decision. Meantime, she was delightedly aware of being observed and commented on ; knew, with almost

childish delight, that she was called the "*belle veuve Anglaise*," and had been no little influenced by the knowledge that of the three artists among whom her choice lay, two had expressed an enthusiastic wish to paint her. That the third had made no such desire evident in words, was perhaps the strong silent argument in his favor.

One day, having ridden far and fast, Jean turned into one of the broad grassy rides of the forest, not far from Chailly, and allowed Loki to fall into a walk.

Bor, with his tongue hanging out, ranged up beside her, and leaning from her saddle to tease him with touches of her whip, her thick, fair hair broke from its fastenings, streaming over her shoulders, and the soft felt-hat in which she defied conventionality, fell to the ground. Lazily good-tempered, for long hours of intercourse with animals and with nature agreed with the best of her being, she laughed, slid from her saddle without complaint, to pick it up, and then, with the rein over her arm, wandered idly along, looking for a friendly stone from which to remount, kicking the dry leaves

about to bring out their pungent odor, altogether contented and purposeless. Thus sauntering she turned a corner, and came suddenly upon a young man, in a sheltered nook, so busily sketching that the rustle of her own and her horse's feet did not disturb him. But when Bor ran to him and sniffed curiously about his feet, he looked up from his work in some wonder at seeing the "English widow" approaching in a state so different from her usual trim elegance. Jean recalled her dog, apologizing for his forwardness.

"An unnecessary friendliness for strangers is one of his worst faults," she said, with a smile which did not forbid a reply. The young man, who was, in fact, that third one who had expressed no wish to paint her, looked at her with genuine pleasure, her voice was so pleasant, her eyes and smile so cordial, without forwardness, her figure, in the long habit, so graceful and stately.

"He is a noble fellow," he said, patting the dog's head. "I am sure he has few faults."

Jean was in a gracious mood. She inquired the way to the "Mare aux Fées,"

which she knew as well as any guide in the forest. She listened to suggestions of places as romantic and more accessible; an old abbaye, buried among the trees, and another nook—an oval hollow, full of heather, overlooked by a miniature precipice—without revealing her familiarity with all.

She courteously managed to look at his sketch, commenting on it with reserve, but in a manner which proved her thorough understanding. A long, desultory conversation on art and kindred things ensued, during which the dog, after various impatient coaxing noises, sat down and pushed his head into her hand, and Loki, whom she had left loose at a little distance, approaching her with the cat-like step of the thoroughbred, rested her head remonstratingly against Jean's shoulder. She rose reluctantly, having within the last ten minutes fully made up her mind that this, and no other, should be the artist of her portrait. A second young man had appeared from the ride during their talk; a short, ugly young man, with a straggling yellow beard, who watched Jean intently from under the

brim of a somewhat dilapidated slouch-hat. His whole attire, indeed, was shabby, with threads and shreds at various seams and edges, and he presented altogether a great contrast to his companion, whose "get-up" was in the extreme of artistic dandyism. To Jean's credit be it recorded, however, that neither his dress, nor the fact of his being strikingly handsome, had influenced her, but the sketch on his easel, in which she had recognized truth, power, and an imagination well held in hand.

He had risen and stood, hat in hand, before Jean, who, also bare-headed, was asking permission to visit his studio. The artist expressed himself flattered; an appointment was made for next day, a painty card, "Mr. Ian Forbes," with a hastily scrawled address, was transferred to Jean's pocket, and with a gracious bow which included the silent man in the slouched-hat, she called her dog and disappeared on foot in the long vista of the wood, the two white animals glimmering in its shadow long after her dark figure was lost to sight.

Whatever the silent man may have thought,

he uttered no opinion, nor did he, as Forbes laughingly suggested, "drop in" at the hour of Jean's call next day. When Forbes beat up his quarters on the succeeding afternoon at dusk, he found him still tongue-tied and thoughtful, but, seeing that his normal state was one in which it was hard for any one else to put in a word edge-wise, and that Forbes now had news to impart, he was, on the whole, not inclined to find fault with his mood.

"I say, Kooystra," he began, slapping himself violently upon the chest. "Wake up, and look at me! I've got an order, d'ye hear me? A portrait."

"The English widow?" inquired Kooystra, indifferently.

"Mrs. Grandison—yes," assented Forbes. "She's fine—fine! That curiously dark skin, with such fair hair and such deep-set gray eyes,—her eyes are wonderful, eh? And a figure like a—like a—"

"Caryatid," suggested Kooystra.

"Thanks; you have a talent for similes. I shall paint her," went on Forbes, fidgeting

with a tube of cadmium. "I shall paint her—I haven't exactly decided how."

"That sort of woman generally decides for you," said Kooystra, stretching out his feet and yawning.

"You don't seem interested," said Forbes, with a shade of offense, giving the tube an unintentionally hard squeeze. "I'll go—confound this thing, now I'm covered with paint—I'll go and talk with some one else. Don't you admire her? Don't you think I'm in luck to get such an order?"

Kooystra recovered himself from a yawn which brought the tears to his eyes, and for answer, pointed to a small canvas propped up on a chair by the window, where the last rays of day combined with the light of an oil street-lamp dimly to reveal it.

Forbes followed the pointing finger obediently, and stood still, after a brief exclamation.

Paul Kooystra's silences generally betokened a painting fit, and to-day he had worked all day, eagerly, feverishly, and Forbes saw the result; a bold, striking sketch of Jean, bare-

headed, a thick lock of fair hair loosened and streaming, the mare's eager, startled head close to her shoulder, and in the eyes, both brute and human, the same wild, fierce, seeking look.

"Hum!" said Forbes; "you've upset all my ideas of her. It's a magnificent sketch—but—but—she's not like *that*, you know."

Kooystra laughed.

"No," he said; "she didn't look like it yesterday. But it's in her—I saw it."

"Saw it—you humbugging, mystical German—you've dreamt yourself into a sort of rhapsody," said Forbes. "You've made a handsome, conventional woman look like a perfect Valkyr."

"That's it—that's it!" cried Kooystra, eagerly, passing at once from his silent mood to one of exceeding loquacity. "Just stop and reflect, my friend, that I am no more of a German than you—born in America of Scotch and English parents—are an Irishman, though I grant you all the salient characteristics of one. Why, you wrong-headed, impulsive, susceptible, belligerent, pseudo-Celt, I'm a Hollander, born and bred. And furthermore, it is you, and not

I, who have an order for a picture. And yet, I only have looked beneath the surface. I alone understand this woman."

"Bah!" said Forbes; "you modern Flying Dutchman; you don't pretend that you saw *all that* in the little while she was talking to me yesterday?"

"By no means!" said Kooystra, with a grin. "I only saw fine capabilities of tragic expression in a singularly striking face. I thought what a Brünhilde she would make, and I drew her as I fancied she could look. I'm glad you saw what I meant. Come along and get some dinner, I'm confoundedly hungry."

Forbes, in turn, was thoughtful for awhile as they passed through the single street toward Sirons; but the atmosphere of the *salle*, the light, and warmth, and congenial company, quickly ended this. The two pretty girls made place for him between them at the fire, where the vin ordinaire was warming inside the fender. Kooystra made a mock speech announcing his good-fortune, and, as Forbes was a favorite, he was congratulated, petted and made much of, in a way to turn the steadiest head,

"What a splendid subject!" said one, for all knew 'la belle Anglaise' by sight. "She's a stately woman, splendidly made."

"Isn't she? isn't she?" cried Forbes, excited, delighted, a little *tête-monté*, and no wonder. "Really, a perfect woman, nobly planned, physically speaking. She ought to be painted as some Northern goddess, Wotan's wife or an Æsir."

"So, your test of beauty is pounds avoirdupois?" said Kooystra, mockingly. "Like the Italians, who say 'Com' é grassa—com' é bella' when they see a fat woman. You humbug, that Scandinavian goddess is *my* idea."

"Kooystra's ideas are so much like Gratiano's reasons," said Forbes; "he has to claim whatever resembles them in other people's."

Kooystra flushed slightly.

"We'll excuse you, to-night," he said, rising and going toward the piano, "because you're naturally excited over your first order."

He thumped out a few dissonant chords, then burst out in a big baritone voice, with the chorus known as the Tannhaüser March, "Hail! Happy Pair,"

With much laughter the others took up the strain, and thereafter, dinner proceeded musically, Verdi's flowing phrases adapting themselves to a demand for more wine, Marguerite woefully imploring the salt, or Lohengrin offering the bread.

During dessert, Forbes was observed to have a good deal to say to the elder of the two girl-painters, and, as a result, Kooystra found himself called into consultation with Miss Randolph, detained beyond his wont, and finally walking home with the two girls and their chaperone, in animated discussion of plans for an excursion to Larchon, projected long before.

What time Forbes, escaping unobserved, was running toward Koostra's rooms, from which he presently emerged, half hidden behind a clumsy canvas, as stealthily as any object 30x50 would allow, to his own studio; trusting to Kooystra's well-known laziness and unmethodical habits, not to miss his picture before noon next day.

CHAPTER VIII.

"To some kind of men, their graces serve them but as enemies."

THE following morning, Jean, accompanied as before by the sedate Pritchett, called again at Forbes' rough-and-ready studio for further consideration of what was feasible in regard to the sittings for her portrait. As she had expected, the young artist's arrangements were made for a winter in Paris, which was just what she wanted, though she preferred to make it appear a matter of indifference.

"Having no ties," she said, with a pensive smile, "I make no plans. I can be as quiet in Paris as elsewhere, and there are certain aspects of life there which have much charm for me."

Still, there was a hesitation in Forbes' manner quite different from the frank cordiality of the day before, and Jean, noticing it, feared she had been too abrupt.

"Pray be frank with me, Mr. Forbes," she said. "I am afraid my tone may have been too business-like, in asking what, I assure you, I consider a great favor, and if so, I beg you to pardon me. Is there any thing"—she hesitated. "Would you like to reconsider the—value—you have placed upon your work? I thought it far too modest."

Forbes flushed and stammered.

"No. Oh! no!" he cried. "Do not imagine any such thing! You must think me insatiable! To have the very sitter I should have chosen from among a thousand come to me, and ask to be painted at my own price! What more could I ask? Only—"

"Ah!" said Jean. "I knew there was an 'only'; now tell it to me, candidly."

"I will," answered Forbes. "I want you to look at this," and he led her to Kooystra's sketch, which he had placed carefully in the best light.

Jean looked, and stood silent. Her eyes dilated, and her face unconsciously assumed the expression of the sketch. A sudden sense that she had something to conceal, came over

her, the first time she had known such a feeling, and for a moment she was bewildered.

"Can any one have seen me that night in the wood?" she thought anxiously; "or did I look like that as I passed the door of the *salle?*"

Forbes, a little nervous himself, did not notice her agitation, which she presently controlled and concealed.

"This sketch," he began, hesitatingly, "is by a friend of mine—young Kooystra, whom you perhaps saw the day I met you—near Chailly. You—who know so well about art—you must appreciate it—you must understand that I—that he—in short—he has so much more talent—is so much more worthy to paint your portrait than I."

"Why," said Jean, much relieved, "this is the very Quixotism of friendship, Mr. Forbes. I admire it—I assure you." She paused and thought intently for a moment. "Now," she resumed, "pray do not be offended with me if I still insist upon your painting my portrait. I mean no disparagement to your friend, for I see his sketch is very fine—finer, I am sure,"

with a teasing smile, "than any thing you can do."

They both laughed, and their embarrassment vanished.

"Though I scarcely recognize myself in it," Jean went on, "I admire it exceedingly, and I wish, if he will allow me, to give him a commission also. But you must forgive me if I still hold you to our bargain and insist upon being painted by a compatriot."

"A compatriot!" said Forbes, surprised. "I thought you were—"

"English—yes, most people do," answered Jean. "My—Mr. Grandison was an Englishman, but I am American."

Forbes could not but yield to a wish so flattering, and his scruples were lessened by the promptness with which Jean followed up her proposition to give Kooystra a commission.

"I shall go to his studio at once," she said, "if you will direct me."

"He is an odd sort of fellow," said Forbes, hesitating as he remembered the many uncertainties of Kooystra's disposition. "Perhaps

I might speak to him first, or had better go with you."

"No!" said Jean, with decision. "I prefer to confront his eccentricity alone and without warning. Trust me, Mr. Forbes—I shall make no more mistakes."

Jean's just confidence in her powers of persuasion carried her swiftly toward Kooystra's lodgings. Pritchett was dismissed as she passed her own door, and before Forbes could have recovered from the perturbation caused by her visit, Kooystra, who, with a gloomy brow, sat contemplating a blank canvas, was surprised by her entrance: calm, gracious, yet distant.

"Mr. Forbes, who is about to paint my picture, gave me your address, Mr. Kooystra," she began, conscious that he must first of all understand that no defection from his friend was hinted at.

Kooystra, on his part, welcomed her undemonstratively; he was courteous, but reserved; he made no apologies for the few slight sketches which he showed her; and his eyes, which were Chinese in shape and palest blue in color, regarded her with a keen and consid-

ering scrutiny which would have been offensive in any one but an artist, whose privilege it is to stare.

Jean gave a well-measured amount of consideration to the sketches, but it was evident that they went for nothing in her decision; her purpose had been already formed.

"Mr. Forbes encourages me to hope, Mr. Kooystra," she said, "that you will be able to find time to paint something for me."

"Mr. Forbes is my very kind friend," said Kooystra, gravely, but with much inward mirth at the idea of his being pressed for time.

"Can, and will you, then, undertake something for me?" went on Jean, in a matter-of-course tone. "My portrait, for instance?"

"I thought Forbes was to paint your portrait?" said Kooystra, abruptly, and instantly on the defensive.

"Indeed, he is," answered Jean. "We have just laid our plans for the winter. But the picture you would paint of me would be totally different from his."

"It certainly would," said Kooystra, permitting himself a smile, to which Jean was too

wise to respond. "I see he has been talking to you of me. Forbes is a good fellow, but rather headlong."

"Pray let me have the credit of the first idea," said Jean, with a slight blush and a look sufficiently pleading, but not too insistent. "I had intended this before I spoke to Mr. Forbes."

"I can not see why," persisted Kooystra.

"If I have a fancy to see myself in many different aspects, may I not gratify it?"

Then, as Kooystra still looked obstinate:

"I am a rich woman, Mr. Kooystra," she went on, with a sad smile and a wistful tone in her voice which robbed the speech of any suspicion of bad taste. "I have no interests, and no ties; and I am somewhat vain. May I not have two pictures of myself, if I like—and it amuses me to sit for them."

The frank confession of vanity had nearly carried the day with Kooystra, but his mood was perverse.

"I don't dispute your right, madame," he said. "I only criticise your choice. "I can not make up my mind to enter into competi-

tion with my friend. Inevitable jealousy would arise as to your preference."

Jean saw hope in this approach to a pleasantry. She had persevered where many women would have been rebuffed, and she now stood silent, looking civilly persistent, while Kooystra looked as civilly obstinate.

"This is not very flattering, Mr. Kooystra," said Jean, at last. "Your sketch was far more so."

"Ah!" said Kooystra, "that, then, is where the sketch went."

"I must appeal to Mr. Forbes to help me persuade you," went on Jean, with petulant disappointment. "Really, I have never encountered any one so immovable."

"Indeed," said Kooystra, his face relaxing at last into a smile. "I am conscious of appearing very rude. I must now try and convince you that I do not wish to offend."

All that was repellent vanished, and was replaced by a geniality and winning charm of manner which caused his personal disadvantages to be wholly overlooked.

Jean, unlike most of her sex, was wise

enough to drop the subject; she responded quickly to the change. Their voices took the tone of old friends talking of what most charmed them; their eyes were lit up with animation and interest. Jean now passed a delightful half-hour, at the end of which she parted cordially from Kooystra, without having advanced by one hair's-breadth toward her purpose.

CHAPTER IX.

"Whose fancy fuses old and new,
And flashes into false and true,
And mingles all, without a plan."

IN the course of the following week, however, something, or nothing, having influenced the whimsical young fellow, Kooystra, rather in spite of the persuasions which were apt to fix him in his opposition, consented to paint a picture of Jean—*on his own conditions.*

Which meant, being interpreted, that he should be allowed to choose his own time and style, that no one was to criticise or advise, or even to see the picture, which, when finished, was to be absolutely his own property, to exhibit or not to exhibit, to sell or retain, as he chose. All these extraordinary stipulations were insisted upon in the perverse, yet winning, manner, which carried off such exactions as would have been scarcely permissible in a prince of art.

"Really, Kooystra," said Forbes, after the twentieth discussion on the subject, "you are incomprehensible."

"That's a damaging admission," said Kooystra, with his eyes fixed upon the bowl of the pipe he held in his mouth, and was trying to light. "*I* would never acknowledge that I found *any* one incomprehensible."

"Well—but—" persisted Forbes, going over his arguments for the hundredth time. "Here is a handsome, attractive woman, asks you in the most flattering manner—"

"Come, Forbes," broke in Paul, "I've heard all this dozens of times before. You and Mrs. Grandison have gained your point."

"No—we have not," interjected Forbes.

"Well, as much as you ever will gain. And now, why can't you be satisfied?"

"Because," said Forbes, pettishly. "I don't think such lunatics as you ought to be at large. I don't care how absurd a man's actions are, if he can only give a good reason for them. And that you won't do."

Kooystra laughed uproariously over this astounding proposition, whereupon Forbes

turned sulky and pretended to be absorbed in a book; and there was silence in heaven for the space of ten minutes.

Then Kooystra spoke, in the tone of one finishing some previous remark.

"There are some women, you know, in whom one feels instant and absolute confidence. Little Miss Wyndham, for instance. I'd trust her with my life—or my soul."

"She'd take a devilish deal better care of it than *you* do," said Forbes, dryly.

"Well," continued Kooystra, without noticing this irrelevant speech. "Mrs. Grandison is *not* one of those women."

The delightful, lazy weeks at Barbizon wore away. Jean returned to Paris about the 15th of November, and established herself in a cozy apartment at the Hotel Louis-le-Grand, quickly gathering round her every feminine daintiness of decoration, and beginning to lead a life of rather ostentatious retirement, softened by some musical and artistic pleasures.

The arrangements for her sittings to Forbes were quickly made, and the sittings began soon after his return to town, but Kooystra

was, as usual, rather impracticable. In the first place, he didn't want her to go to his studio at all; he simply wanted to have the freedom of her *salon*—see her often and as he pleased, be tame cat about the house—see her alone and among her friends.

"But, Mr. Kooystra," said Jean, laughing outright over these modest demands, "I have no friends, and I can not begin to make a collection of them by giving two wild young artists the run of my *salon*."

"Well, then, would she be sure and let him know whenever she went to the opera?" Yes, that Jean would do with pleasure.

Then Forbes, to whom the conventional arrangement of Mrs. Grandison's driving to his studio in her brougham, accompanied by her respectable maid—was perfectly acceptable, made some modest suggestions.

He knew a young American lady, an art-student in fact—here the designing fellow had the grace to blush and Kooystra grinned maliciously. "A Miss Wyndham, a charming girl, and if she might be permitted to make Mrs. Grandison's acquaintance, then he and

she and Kooystra might sometimes call on Mrs. Grandison of an evening, and so Kooystra might see Mrs. Grandison among her friends.

"Ay," said Kooystra; "now that's a promising and disinterested suggestion."

Forbes blushed; Jean assented rather eagerly, and the plan was forthwith carried out.

Miss Wyndham proved to be the younger and prettier of the two girls whom Jean had seen at Barbizon; she was fresh-natured and enthusiastic, fell in love with Jean at once, as girls are prone to do with charming older women; and thenceforward, the eccentric process of "sitting" to Kooystra was carried out somewhat on this wise:

Miss Wyndham, her merry chaperone and the two artists, would arrive in the evening at the pretty *salon* which Jean had made pleasant by every device of shaded lamp and soft hanging, picture-hung walls, and book-strewn tables. Some of Kooystra's best sketches were there, which, for a wonder, he had permitted her to buy—a piano, heaped with *partitions*, and "Opere scelte," and a few

flowers, in shallow bowls. The great white dog lay on the rug before a heaped-up wood fire evidently not built after French principles, and Jane herself, who in her ambitious dreams had not overestimated her power to charm as a hostess, rising, in her long black robes, to welcome them. Kooystra, often moody and variable in society where it was to his interest to shine, was at his best in this little circle, suggestive and facile in his talk, leading their minds as he wished; but when the discussion had become general, and all were earnest, eager, interested, he fell silent, watching Jean with an intensity of scrutiny. Forbes, transparent young fellow, whose heart was in his eyes—when he looked at Miss Wyndham—used to wonder what those strange looks might mean, but it never occurred to him to speculate upon what might be hidden under the serene and contented expression of Jean's high-bred, intelligent face. Nothing in Kooystra's choice of topics surprised him, for he was accustomed to hear that young man discourse as the spirit moved him upon all subjects from Theosophy to Political Economy, with inter-

ludes of Speculative Theology, Spiritualism and Æsthetics; but he might have noticed a tendency toward the mysterious, the weird, fantastic and horrible, an endeavor to rouse feelings of supernatural terror or awe, or the pleasurable counterfeits of these genuine emotions which have taken their place in modern society, and are the rather agreeable concomitants of the tales of Hoffman, De Quincey and Poe.

His own picture of Jean was progressing satisfactorily, in the most commonplace manner. She was an ideal sitter, patient, interested, lavish of time, and possessed of that rarest gift, the result of absolute health and nerves at leisure from themselves, the power of immobility. He knew that she bestowed some brief hours in Kooystra's studio also, but asked no questions of either one. What went on there amused and puzzled Jean herself, who also asked no questions. She went in her every day attire, the severely simple black dress, which hung so gracefully. Kooystra was a charming host, receiving her with cordiality, showing her every courteous atten-

tion, talking in his pleasantest tones on every attractive subject.

Occasionally he would ask her to place her hand in this or that position, to turn her head this way or that, and for a moment would gaze with frowning intentness, then dismissing the subject with a sort of grunt, would begin to talk of art, to unveil with a frankness and spontaneity unusual with him his ideals, revealing the springs of his convictions, his ardor, his dreams.

Jean's programme for the future included a plan of universal fascination and sway over the minds of the other sex, and this, in her opinion, was to be best accomplished by being "all things to all men." Gifted with tact and much dramatic power, she would have found this versatility easy, even had she not possessed one of those natures, frequent among women, which without a suspicion of pretense, fall so readily into sympathy and accord with the moods and ideas of those with whom they are in contact, as to make them for the moment practically their own.

Kooystra's most intimate associates jarred

upon him at times, questioning him when he felt most reserved, demanding plans and purposes when he was most inclined to drift with the stream of circumstances. Jean, who never petted him nor purred over him as other women did, who asked no questions, and demanded no results, but who responded to the mood of the moment, and was thoughtful or merry as he seemed to will, soothed him inexpressibly.

"Here," he thought to himself, "is one person who understands me." Which Jean would never have taken the trouble to do, being entirely absorbed in the effect she herself was producing; but the belief had the usual result.

And at the end of two months, Jean, who watched with intelligent interest every stroke of Forbes' brush, absolutely did not know whether Kooystra was painting a picture of her, or not.

Meantime, a very pleasant intimacy grew up between Jean and the young girl-student, Sylvia Wyndham.

Sylvia was an American, aristocrat to the finger-tips, *comme il y en a pas mal* in that dem-

ocratic country. Her mother was sprung from one of the French families, which in the last years of the eighteenth century, leavened the society of certain towns in New Jersey; her father came of an English stock planted in "the colonies" when these comprised but a little strip along the Atlantic seaboard from Old Plymouth to the Carolinas.

Sylvia's eager mind had fed itself upon all that was best in books, but her artistic cravings had been starved in the famine-stricken precincts of a small inland town. Her longings for artistic expression, she had satisfied as best she might, passing through all the stages of soi-disant "Art-work," from faint pencil-sketches on shiny board and "spatter-work," to the pasting of glazed figures on the inside of gold-fish globes and the adornment of drain-pipes with "conventionalized" daubs in oil.

But something there was in Sylvia's nature, a scorn of small pretense, a stern directness of judgment, a recoil from all that was petty or untrue, from which it followed, as the night the day, that her ideals remained pure and unperverted. Thus she triumphed over all

that was belittling in her surroundings, keeping in her heart an altar ready, whereon she might, without irreverence, kindle a sacred fire.

When, happily while Sylvia was still young, by the death of a distant relative, a large fortune fell in to Mrs. Wyndham, her hopes and dreams of study abroad were fulfilled. Mrs. Wyndham had taken her at once to France, but imperative business having recalled her, she had been unwilling to deprive Sylvia of a day's steeping in the artistic atmosphere, and had left her, carefully chaperoned and companioned, to continue her work at Barbizon and in Paris.

Sylvia had been seized with an enthusiasm of admiration for Jean, and Jean herself found an altogether fresh pleasure in the society of the very first one of her own sex whom she had ever known well, and whose eager, ingenuous, yet cultivated mind, made her companionable at every point.

CHAPTER X.

"'Tis not your work, but Love's—the Master Love; a more ideal artist he, than all."

IT is November. A keen north-east wind hurries long drifts of gray cloud across a gray sky; the trees sigh, stretching forth stiff arms and wavering fingers as if to stay the flight of their last wrinkled leaves. At the forest's edge stands a stately woman, bare-headed, pale, in somber garb; a white hound fawns upon her—her right hand holds the reins, while her left is on the neck of a great gray horse, whose startled head is close to hers, whose streaming mane mingles with a loose lock of her fair hair, and whose wild eyes reflect her fierce, boding glance.

This is what the eager crowds, elbowing one another in the long galleries of the Palais d' Industrie, saw hanging before them in a dull gold frame, and signed "Paulus Kooystra."

The general public, which is always attracted

by size, gazed and conjectured; uninstructed by the catalogue they pronounced it "bien beau mais un peu sombre," "une vivandière," "la Reine Atosse," or "Bradamante, d' Ariost," according to their degrees of culture and imagination.

The fortunate possessors of a catalogue in which it was set down as a "dame en amazone" were variously affected, but perhaps the general opinion was voiced by a man in a blowse, who said, "Dame—ce n' est pas ma femme que je ferai peindre comme ça."

Certain Philistines, attracted to it for similar reasons, thought it a fine, large picture, but not bright-colored enough, and besides, what did it mean?

The dilettanti admired, and spoke vaguely of "feeling," "poetry," and "insight," and one fortunate young person of that ilk, lately steeped in Wagnerism and legendary lore, hit upon an idea, and went about murmuring: "C'est un saga—tout un saga"—which became forthwith the party-word.

The artists were more precise and less unanimous: talking learnedly of handling,

technique and breadth—but on the whole approved. Some few men and women, artists with souls above the technicalities and the jealousies of their art, amateurs unbiased by cliques and uninfluenced by picture-dealers, recognized the true merit of Kooystra's picture, and saw more than mere promise in its daring.

Forbes' portrait of Jean had been hung in another room, and had made a strong impression.

This woman who was almost beautiful; whose simple black gown revealed a throat and arms which were superb; who was neither putting on a glove, nor holding a book, nor toying with a flower—but who sat in an old leather chair with her exquisite hands lying idle in her lap—like a certain "Argia, goddess of Laziness"—a mythological personage invented by one of the Kingsleys—this picture appealed to every eye; to layman as to critic—to the one by its inherent charm; to the other as a splendid achievement, almost a masterpiece. The same fortunate young person who had dubbed Kooystra's picture a "Saga," one day discovered a strange resemblance in the faces of the "Dame en

Amazone, and the "Portrait de Madame G——." The news spread; there was much comparison, much running to and fro, and a sort of cult of the two paintings became fashionable, which entailed much talk about Madame G., the unknown "veuve Anglaise"—a state of things which Jean had, perhaps, shrewdly foreseen. At this moment, had Jean chosen to appear, even without introductions, taking the tide at the flood, her success would have been assured. Every one talked of her. Kooystra kept himself as invisible as one of the "little people," but Forbes was overwhelmed with questions. He was most discreet, speaking guardedly of Mme. G. in terms of the deepest respect, and it was only on much persuasion from an old and valued friend of his own, that he consented to ask permission to present Colonel Yorke to Jean.

"She is most reserved," he said, to that gentleman. "Not at all the sort of person to pick up acquaintances anywhere and everywhere."

"You flatter me—and yourself," said his friend with a laugh. "But I wish to meet

' Mme. G——,' not from idle curiosity, but from a genuine interest with which her face inspires me."

"I'll try my luck for *you*," repeated Forbes, but when he called at the Hotel Louis-le-Grand to fulfill his promise, Jean was gone.

CHAPTER XI.

"To say the Truth,
True and not true."

WHATEVER impulse, whatever fitful mood of infirm purpose, had prompted Jean to leave Paris at the very moment when the social success she craved seemed within her grasp, at least it was no hesitancy, no lack of ease in playing the part she had chosen. Her first slight embarrassments had been those of an actress not yet thoroughly conversant with her rôle. But as, on the stage, with each repetition new possibilities, new aspects of the character are developed, until the impersonation has become something like a well-fitting glove, which, while receiving the impress of every characteristic curve and hollow, imposes its own fixed shape upon the hand within; so Jean, having now been "Mrs. Grandison" to all about her for some ten months, had so thoroughly fitted herself into that personage,

that her very thoughts were but complacent spectators of the finish of her assumption of the part.

The vivid imagination which had enlivened many a dreary hour of her colorless girlhood, was combined in her with strong dramatic instincts, which had hitherto found no expression, except in dreams. She had often wished to be an actress—in her girlish reveries she was always posing to an imaginary audience in rôles of more or less grandeur, but all of equal fascination; in her isolated and unnoticed youth picturing an imaginary self—such as she wished to appear. And now, with her own delighted consciousness and all the rest of the world as spectators, she was playing a part which was better than her dreams.

The question of right and wrong never occurred to her. As a deception it differed in nowise to her mind, from the illusion effected by an actress on her more limited public; her conscience had not taken cognizance of it as a fault, so simply and naturally had it seemed to come about, of so little consequence to any one but herself did it all appear. The only step which

had cost her the least agitation had been that first announcing herself by an unfamiliar name at the hotel at Calais. Since then all had gone on with the most wonderful smoothness; she found herself in what she considered—and in this Jean was not alone—the most enviable position in the world, that of a young, rich widow. She had already succeeded in making herself somewhat interesting to the public and she became each day more and more interested in herself.

It had seemed at first as if this might be the opportunity she looked for, the moment when the doors of the magic circle calling itself society were a-jar for her; but she had reflected that the introductions of a couple of young artists could be of little service to her, and something else had come into her mind at the same time, as not being precisely as she wished it. Continually dwelling on herself and her assumed character, it had occurred to her that a woman in her ostensible position would be likely to have some, at least, of her property in a more tangible and recognizable form than the convenient and portable bonds

which up to this moment she had been carrying about. They had served their turn; and she smiled to herself as she thought to what an unexpected use they had been put, in thus enabling her to make a change of name and identity, as she had done, at a day's notice, with no trouble about pecuniary matters.

Though Jean was capable of an immense amount of shrewd and long-headed calculation, she was yet swayed to an extraordinary extent by her impulses, and upon this one she had acted with her wonted quickness. A hasty line to each of the three persons on whose interest in her she counted or whose friendship she valued, namely, Sylvia, Forbes and Kooystra, a brief announcement to the invaluable Pritchett, about business calling her to England; a business interview with Madame la propriétaire, and Jean was off. Her neat little brougham was placed at Sylvia's orders, Pritchett and Loki, the mare, were left to luxurious idleness, and even Jean's inseparable companion, the great white dog, was not permitted to accompany her.

Thus modestly unattended, Jean betook

herself to a *pension* in London, where she had retained a room by telegraph, a sort of "family boarding-house" of the best class, much affected by Americans, which had been recommended to her by a charming little lady of that nationality whom she had met in the train the previous autumn between Paris and Amiens.

There were about thirty boarders, including the inevitable snuffy and depressed widow, and an aged spinster, whose appearance placed her so far beyond the "allotted space" that when she stated that she did not wish a cap for a "young girl of nineteen, neither did she wish a cap for an old woman of ninety," the beholder could only conclude that she was on the debatable ground between the latter age and a hundred. There was all the variety of the American traveling public, from the eager and vivacious young girls declaiming against the restraints of English civilization, and equally interested in millinery and antiquities; the merry matron coming abroad to "educate the children," leaving "papa" to form a base of supplies at home; and the

"old hands" taking a run for the summer on a marvelously small sum; to specimens of that class who cause the profoundest wonder as to why a discriminating Providence permitted them to come at all. Middle-aged, illiterate people, these last, not rich, spending painful savings in a way which affords them a minimum of pleasure; dull of apprehension—absolutely unable to grasp the meaning of what they see, yet plodding bravely through their allotted months of traveling, swayed here and there by any one's advice, voluble only on the hideous discomfort of bedrooms without running water; and returning at last to their native land with a mass of ill-digested recollections of incomprehensible things, and finding in the carved carrots and beets with which the steamship steward decked his dishes "the prettiest things we've seen yet."

In this enumeration, however, others must not be forgotten: the really intelligent and refined people of good position and moderate means, the very people Jean, in her wisdom, had counted upon meeting in such a place. Her first appearance among them, in her miti-

gated mourning, was hardly noticed, so quietly was it effected ; but it was not long before the charm exerted over both sexes by the reserve and indifference of an attractive woman, made itself felt. Jean made no advances—but others did ; she did not court notice, but others courted her, and presently, had she chosen, she could have been the "intimate friend," of half the people in the house.

The first two weeks of her stay had been chiefly occupied in patient study of advertisements such as the following :

A Maisonette in —— St., containing seven bedrooms, bath room, dining, and drawing-rooms, with good basement. To be sold. Giddy & Turner. Pall Mall, L., W.

A Bijou Residence in South Belgravia. Dining and drawing-rooms ; three bedrooms ; fitted bath and usual offices.

Havant. To be sold. Gentleman's Residence. Three reception, ten bed, and dressing-rooms, two stalls, good garden and paddock of two acres.

Isle of Wight. A lovely place to be sold or let. Furnished. High ; bracing ; matchless views ; shady garden, meadows, fowl, and cow-houses ; lodge : three sitting, and six bedrooms ; bath. Good bathing and yachting.

Kent. Easy reach of town. Charming country residence, surrounded by pretty, park-like grounds. Lodge, stabling. Farmery. Four spacious reception and billiard rooms. Every convenience for a moderate establishment. Rent only £225, or the estate of 50 acres will be sold.

Hard upon this came excursions in cabs to the regions described, made very quietly and alone. The third week was taken up by negotiations, as brief and quietly conducted as possible, for a certain small house in Hay Hill Street, the convenient situation and outward aspect of which had pleased her, and which she purchased without much question as to price.

There had been a few short country trips also, and the same week saw her the possessor of a little place in Somerset, which she had bought in the same business-like way: not haggling over terms, nor yet showing herself so indifferent as to the value she was to receive for her money, as to excite remark.

When all this was done, and then only—did Jean become at all accessible, gradually allowing the tentative civilities of her table-neighbors to bear fruit in pleasant conversation, lingering a little longer after meals, and at last

at Miss Masters' entreaty, overcoming her reluctance to spend her evenings in the drawing-room. Then too, in a moment of expansion, did Jean explain to Miss Masters, that, to her distress, she found her little house in Hay Hill in such disrepair, that on her tenant's account she positively must do something to it. As this would necessitate a much longer stay in London than she had intended, she should send for her carriage and her maid—she was so disappointed—she had meant to have been "aux eaux," by this time. All this being duly repeated, as Jean expected, the assiduities of the favored few were redoubled, and a tall, handsome Irishman who did not look above thirty, in spite of a certain puffiness of the lids of his too liquid eyes, made many efforts to add himself to the number.

But Major Limber had not found favor in Jean's eyes; little as she had been in the world she was yet of it, in every fiber, and she felt that no man of Major Limber's kind, of the clubs, of the world, of experiences and of dashing tastes, would deliberately choose the milk-and-water existence of a boarding-house with-

out ulterior motive. She promptly set him down in the category of fortune-hunters, feeling unreasonable bitterness toward him. Jean herself—not needing money, "meaning no harm," by all her schemes and plans, acting, in her own view, merely in a new kind of "Commedia dell' Arte," whose complications had the charm of being as unexpected as life itself, was wholly unconscious that he could have a right to characterize her as an intrigante. Major Octavius Limber, however, was far from wearing the outward signs of his true character. The only son of an Irish squire, from whom he had inherited, besides the barren acres of Knocktopher, only some expensive tastes, and a useful unscrupulousness as to the means of gratifying them—he was handsome and distinguished, with good manners slightly tarnished and the wit and aplomb of the true Irishman. He was far too astute to offend by too open a pursuit of wealth, veiling his approaches under a true Irish susceptibility as regards pretty girls and posing as the devoted admirer of all such under Miss Masters' roof.

Jean had not been prejudiced by any fresh

assiduities contingent upon the arrival of her carriage. Major Limber's civilities had been persistently offered—to her good looks—from the first, and with a fine strategy, he rather drew back as the indisputable evidences of her wealth appeared ; but she was conscious that he had never wavered for a moment in his purpose. When he talked with a diplomatic frankness of his "little place" at Knocktopher, and of the "unpaid rents" which necessitated the economy of living at a boarding-house, she was conscious, though the words were addressed to pretty Miss This, or charming Miss That, for whose ears they were really intended. Clever as he was, and well masked as were his efforts to force his friendship upon her, Jean remained coldly polite, re-enforcing her prejudice by the strong conviction which had come to her, that Major Limber and the man whose attentions on board ship had so offended her ; Major Limber and the officer whose bold glances at Dover had decided her change of name, were one and the same.

CHAPTER XII.

"The most enduring wounds we receive in life, are those we suffer in our vanity."

THE pleasant task of "doing over" the little house in Hay Hill, with all its delights of deciding upon papers, and tints, and patterns in stained glass, could not be stretched over the whole summer, and Jean saw little to gain by a further sojourn at Miss Masters. The stream of new people passing through had deteriorated in quality—and Major Limber still remained. She had carefully avoided all contact with her new tenants, leaving them to suppose her alterations the long-promised "repairs" of their former landlord, and when the Randolphs, the only people whom she had admitted to any thing like intimacy, left for a tour of the Cathedral towns, she felt herself somewhat lonely. At first Jean had not been altogether pleased to recognize in Miss Randolph the elder of the two girl-students at Bar-

bizon, but both mother and daughter proving companionable, and acquainted in good circles, she had allowed herself to be won by their adroit and delicate flatteries. Sadie Randolph's enthusiasm for art had lasted just long enough for the duration of a "spree," had served, as she said, to "put in the time" in a manner both cheap and unexceptionable, while Mrs. Randolph was obliged to be elsewhere. But no devotion to art as art had existed, to tempt her to forego the pleasant lazy life of American Colonies in Winter-cities for the sake of earnest study with Sylvia. Neither had her interest in the latter been sufficient for the keeping-up of a correspondence; she had remained in ignorance of all but the first negotiations for Jean's portrait, and though she had half recognized in Jean the "belle veuve" of the gray horse and white dog at Barbizon, her shrewd far-seeing tact led her to drop the subject very quickly upon finding in Jean a disinclination to dwell upon it. Nor did she ever betray the tacit confidence thus reposed in her, a "carriage-acquaintance" of infinite good nature and a tendency to lend any of her belongings,

being too valuable a possession in London, to be jeopardized by any indiscretion.

The pleasant companions of her daily drives once gone, Jean saw no temptation to linger in town through a dusty season in whose gayeties she took no part.

"Pritchett," she said, one day, awaking out of a reverie with one of her sudden decisions, a plan springing full-fledged from her brain, like Minerva from Jove's forehead :

"I have a little house in Somersetshire, which the tenants have just given up. I have a great mind to go there for the rest of the summer, or until I am ready to go home. I don't mean"—she thought to herself—"to be always talking, like Major Limber, about a place no one has ever seen."

"Indeed, madam," answered Pritchett, "I do think some quiet country air would do you good."

She was really attached to Jean, whose unexacting disposition and quiet serenity of speech and manner won all who were about her or in her service.

"Yes, I think I will do it," went on Jean.

"Perhaps Miss Wyndham will come to me for a month or two. Pritchett, you may engage some people for me. A cook and two maids will be enough, the house is very small. No, three maids, as I don't wish to have a man in the house. But I shall buy some more horses, so Girth had better get two men for the stable; there is a gardener there, but I wish all the rest to go down from London."

The plan thus concisely stated, was carried out to the letter. The house, small, as Jean had said, but a charming *old* small house: a little straggling in plan, with dormers and lattices thick with creepers and climbing roses, and a velvet lawn, level with door and window-sills, had been bought, fully furnished with the simple comforts of country gentility. All sorts of modern plenishings in the way of American chairs, striped awnings, Indian mattings for indifferent use as dado or door-curtain, to spread under foot or hang overhead; hammocks, vases, china jugs, rush tables and sofas, Chinese lanterns, dainty silverware and "high-art" table-linen, afforded Jean another week of delight in the purchasing, and

were sent down to complete the charm of the tiny home at Manycotes.

Sylvia was written to, and promised her presence in September and October, and Mrs. Randolph so shaped her tour as to be able to accept Jean's invitation for two weeks in July, promising herself much satisfaction in writing home full accounts of her visit in an English country house, though Jean apologized for the dullness into which she was luring them. "No one will have come home so early," she said. "You will meet no one but the curate before the twelfth of August."

Cunning Jean, who, in her several trips to Manycotes had become acquainted with said curate, just installed, and as new to the place as herself, therefore not likely to know or reveal the fact that she had never lived there before; she was also well-assured that in July her other neighbors would really be away, and her lack of acquaintances among them not noticed by her guests.

There remained two or three weeks before the coming of these last, in which to get the house in daintiest order, and to put to good

use the remarkable facility Jean possessed, of informing herself as to every thing round about her, without asking a question; picking up information here and there as unostentatiously as a white wasp captures flies, and assimilating it in equal retirement. During this time too, something occurred, of which Jean learned only the salient facts, but which turned to her advantage, while she remained absolutely unconscious of its bearing upon her affairs. A feud, at once fierce and irreconcilable, was established between Pritchett and the servants she had chosen for her mistress' household, and whom she considered insufficiently mindful of that mistress' interests. Girth, who had been courting Pritchett ever since their co-service began, had a shrewd eye to her savings, and remained devotedly attached to her, while the two stable lads, dazzled by the bright eyes of the maids and the solid charms of Mrs. Cook—joined their faction. Between the two camps there was no communication. Girth and Pritchett, after the manner of lovers in other grades of life, were all in all to each other, seeking no other

society, and hence the indirect benefit to Jean. For the kitchen faction, naturally inquiring, and with a perfectly laudable curiosity, soon learned, from the country gossip, that their mistress had acquired the property not six weeks before, by purchase, instead of holding it, as Pritchett had assumed, under her husband's will. And this fact, which it was evidently to Jean's interest that her permanent servants should not know, remained uncommunicated, through Girth and Pritchett holding themselves severely aloof from kitchen gossip. The quiet weeks at Manycotes afforded little incident, and no new materials for the plot of Jean's comedy of contemporary life. The *mise-en-scene* was perfect, the performers ladylike and graceful—and nothing happened; a state of affairs out of which not only some contemporary playwrights, but a good many favorite novelists, would be enabled to evolve a vast deal of very pretty writing.

The Randolphs arrived. Jean herself met them at the station, ready to take pretty Sadie into her dainty phaeton, while honoring Mrs. Randolph with sole possession of the

victoria. "It is a modest little establishment," wrote Jean, "and affords no 'coach of state,' so I shall meet you myself."

And Jean's disgust may be imagined when she saw, descending from the railway carriage and offering a courteous arm to Mrs. Randolph, Major Limber himself.

This bold move on the major's part was due partly to a wish to convince himself of the reality of Jean's proprietary charms, and the consequent advisability of continuing the chase, partly to the Irish audacity and good self-opinion which led him to believe she really could not resist him when she found him in thorough earnest. From this latter dream, he was destined to a rude awakening.

Jean's surprise at seeing him was not allowed to appear; no irritation showed itself in her face or in the placidity of her manner. It was Mrs. Randolph who nervously apologized for his presence, hopelessly bungling a speech over which she had been brooding for hours in the train, while Sadie was laughing over the major's dull, witty guide-book dissertations; and managing to convey the idea that she had

helplessly begged him to take care of them, instead of the veiled disclaimer of responsibility which she had intended; and that she was quite too deeply indebted to him for words.

"Indeed, Mrs. Randolph," said the handsome major, secretly delighted at having his purpose thus masked, "you are quite too good to me. I've some people at Bath, and running down to see them, could do no less than escort these fair strangers to their journey's end, when it was so little out of my way."

He turned a most fascinating smile upon Jean, shrewdly calculating on her knowing how very far he had come out of his way to Bath, for her sake; but he had *not* calculated on a readiness and audacity equal to his own. Jean met the smile with placid blankness, and said, in suave and unmoved tones:

"How very kind of Major Limber! And now, Major Limber, if you will get into the carriage with Mrs. Randolph, I shall be happy to take you home to lunch with us, and shall then take pleasure in sending you to meet the up express at five, by which I know you can reach Bath in time for dinner."

And thus, with bitterness and gnashing of teeth, as well as with an uncomfortable and profitless call upon his purse—for of course he hadn't a soul at Bath—ended Major Limber's scheme of a visit at Manycotes.

CHAPTER XIII.

"There is, even for the most confirmed hypochondriac, a magic in the word—Rome! Artists, poets, sovereigns, statesmen and saints, 'young men and maidens,' all have found, or can find, their happiness there."

THIS story, not being a novel of the guide-book or descriptive order, though it has already wandered to many places on the surface of this good old globe, and is destined to wander yet a little more, is not the place to enlarge upon the above text, except in applying it in certain particular cases. Moreover, as it is peculiarly a text not to be "understanded of the vulgar," (read those who have not been to Rome), it would be much writing to little result; while, after all, the conclusion of the whole matter may be summed up in the words, true though few, of the proverb which says "*Chi Roma non vede, Roma non crede.*" Drawn, then, by motives as various as their characters, the middle of December

found in Rome not only Forbes and Kooystra, but Sylvia Wyndham and her mother, Jean—and Major Limber. With the two young men it was a long-cherished plan, dependent upon the state of the exchequer, and now to be carried out on the strictest principles of economy; so, instead of gravitating to the Via Margutta or Gregoriana, they had found quarters at an imperceptible price, in a queer nook near the Tiber. To Sylvia it was the fulfillment of a dream. To winter in Rome with her darling mother, in an artistic atmosphere, the companion of artists, and with some modest claim—more modest than necessary—to be called an artist herself—Sylvia felt herself blessed indeed.

To Major Limber, Rome, like most other places, was a hunting-ground to which he returned each year, after the fashion of all sportsmen, with new hopes effacing the memory of old failure.

As for Jean, who on a sudden found herself free, rich, popular, and possessed of that new treasure—a friend—she was in a curiously contented state. Whatever ambitious plans were

in her mind, whatever purpose of a return to her own country with the prestige of foreign social success, she was satisfied for the moment to leave them looming vaguely on the horizon of her present, leading a dozy, dreamy sort of existence, in which she was nearer happiness than she had ever been. The two months Sylvia had spent with her at Manycotes had really been the happiest days she had ever known. For the first time in her life she had been intimately associated with a cultivated woman of intellectual powers as good as her own; who, with her, could discuss, criticise, appreciate and enjoy on equal terms. Her eight years of seniority were felt only as an advantage, adding a sort of deference and trust to Sylvia's affection. No one can be insensible to the flattery of being looked up to; and for Jean, to whom admiration was altogether new, it was the sweetest, most intoxicating incense.

Little, then, was needed, besides the prospect of Sylvia's presence, to tempt her to Rome; she loved the place; even in those old days of slavery she had felt its charm, and

she fancied she should like its foreign society, entrance into which, in her new position should not be difficult. So Sylvia, lately arrived at the Hotel dell' Universo in the Via Porta Pinciana, received a line from Jean which she handed to her mother with a look of delight:

"I have written for rooms at your hotel," wrote Jean, "though I fancy I shall by and by prefer a little apartment; but I wish to be near you for some weeks at least. Manycotes was too lonely without you, and I was obliged to fly to Paris much sooner than the exigencies of my wardrobe really compelled. I am bringing Loki with me, for I count upon long rides on the Campagna with you. And I also bring two carriages, but no horses, for I mean to hire at first, and afterward to try and buy a pair of the little black Roman horses which I remember so well. Dear Bor comes of course, and Pritchett and Girth, whom you already know, so we shall be quite a Manycotes colony in Rome. I look forward with much pleasure to meeting your mother. You know it is a well known fact that each generation deteriorates a little, from mother to daughter—so if *you* are so charming, what must Madame la

Mère be? Pray remember me to Mr. Forbes and Mr. Kooystra, if you see them. I doubt not we shall renew with much zest our discussions upon 'fate, free-will and foreknowledge,' and 'Shakespeare and the musical glasses.' I am so eager to follow my letter I can not spare the time to make it longer. Present my compliments and regards to Mrs. Wyndham, and believe me ever your attached friend, JEAN ST. GEORGE GRANDISON."

"Isn't it a charming letter? doesn't she write charmingly?" cried enthusiastic Sylvia.

"Ostentatious? a little—isn't it?" asked Mrs. Wyndham, handing it back to her daughter. "So much about the horses and servants and all that."

"Oh! mother! if you knew her, you would never think of such a thing; it is only that she knows I am interested in every one and every thing at Manycotes. I knew all the horses by their names. If you could but see it! It is the simplest house—but so perfect. No man-servant even, only maids—and every thing so daintily simple. She is so used to having those things all her life, she never thinks of *parading* them, but it is natural for her to

have them. She is so devoted to Loki and Bor, and I'm sure I love Bor as if he were my own brother!"

Mrs. Wyndham laughed.

"Well, my little daughter," she said, "I have great confidence in your discretion."

And so Jean, arriving, was received with a warm welcome not only by Sylvia, but by Mrs. Wyndham, who felt her confidence in her daughter's judgment justified, at sight of the refined, stately woman, with a winning sadness in her handsome face. The first weeks of her stay, however, were perhaps not precisely what she could have wished; she was glad to be with Sylvia, she was glad to be at Rome, but something still was lacking to her absolute content. With an appearance which grew more attractive with every day's increasing belief in herself—a great help to good looks when it does not betray itself in a fatuous consciousness; with wealth and a name which seemed to entitle her to a place and position in the only world she cared for, Jean did not find herself *lancée* as quickly as she had hoped.

Sylvia had many friends in Rome, and was

much liked; too popular indeed, for the prosperity of her studies. Jean found the girl less engrossed with her than ever before, and though she and her mother were kind and cordial, Mrs. Wyndham's liking growing warmer every day, such passing introductions as they were able to give her led to nothing more. The little brougham or the victoria with the quickly purchased Roman horses were as much Sylvia's as hers—for Jean was generous with those she loved, though too wise to court popularity by extending these favors to the casual acquaintances of the *table d'hôte*. But in spite of Sylvia's undiminished affection, Jean was much alone, a good deal discouraged, and beginning to think she had perhaps better pose as a would-be convert, and by throwing herself into the arms of the clerical party gain entrance into a certain section of Roman society.

It was one of the glorious, golden-sunny days *not* absolutely characteristic of a Roman winter —for the enthusiastic traveler, recalling past joys, is too apt to forget that there, as elsewhere, "some rain must fall, some days must be dark and dreary;"—it was, however, one of

those days, incomparable when they do come, and Sylvia, having "stolen an afternoon," as she declared, from her other engagements, was riding with Jean across the grassy stretch of the Campagna. Jean's groom, dismounted from his clever little English bay in Sylvia's favor, pounded after them on one of the Roman horses with ill-concealed disgust; but the gray and bay mares were as contented as their riders, pacing soberly side by side with much interchange of nose-touchings and equine confidences, while Jean and Sylvia chatted idly and happily above their heads.

"How idle I have been!" Sylvia was saying, in a voice by no means repentant. "I am such a cheat too, after writing mamma so much about the 'atmosphere of art,' and after all, it turns out to be an atmosphere of music and dancing. I am more frivolous than I was at eighteen."

"Yes," said Jean, with a smile, "I hoped a great deal from some of the sketches you made at Manycotes. You know I can not go to America without something of yours—to keep you in my mind."

The glance of trustful affection they exchanged told how little this was needed.

"I am too happy to be industrious, I believe," with a little laugh of irrepressible delight. "To be in Rome—with you, and dear mamma—it seems too good to be true, and it demoralizes me."

"You think then," said Jean, "that it is true, as we were reading one day at Manycotes—

> "'The heart must bleed before it feels,
> The pool be troubled before it heals.'

Do you really think no enduring achievement possible as the outcome of an untroubled, happy life?"

"That is M. Kooystra's belief, not mine"—a sudden thoughtfulness shadowing her bright face. "He is very odd, I think. He is so young and seems so gay, and yet he has done so wonderfully much in his art—he has really one of the greatest talents I have ever encountered. I am always sorry to hear him speak so bitterly."

"Perhaps it is only true of some," said Jean, rather sadly. "But I do not like to think so. My own life has not been happy, and I have

achieved nothing; trouble has only imbittered me and deadened every faculty. I am sure I might have been a good woman if I had had a happy youth—like yours."

"Dear Mrs. Grandison!" cried Sylvia fondly, stretching out her hand to her; "I don't see *how* you could have been better! I am sure I could not have loved you so much if you had been. You would have been priggish and goody-goody, and all sorts of horrid things!"

"At all events," said Jean, returning her clasp with a tender smile, "I mean to believe that for you it will be different. That you may achieve great things, and yet be happy, too. That the fair goddess, Fortune, may fall deep in love with thee, as Forbes said to you on your birthday. Sylvia, if unanimity of good wishes will serve, you should prosper."

Sylvia blushed a little, turning away her head, and answered:

"Oh! I *mean* to be diligent. I must not disappoint so many who love me. To-night is the ball—and after the ball no more frivolity! I must work. But to-day—" turning her glowing face to Jean—"I feel so *overwhelmingly*

happy—I can't tell what it means. I am sure something good is going to happen to me. Let us gallop."

Jean laughed and shook her rein ; the horses, too long restrained, sprang forward, rushing eagerly across the grassy slopes. The shepherds in their goat-skin garments with their great, gaunt, wolf-like dogs, looked up from among their startled sheep and muttered " Pazze Inglese," as the splendid horses dashed past, and Dance, the groom, inly echoed the impolite phrase, as his awkward brute came on his knees across a small ditch which the others scarcely noticed in their stride.

They had come out by the Porta Pia and had ridden far along the Via Nomentana, but remembering the ball to which Sylvia was going, they turned homeward at about the hour when the Roman world was beginning to drive out in wheeled vehicles of various degrees of splendor.

Riding on the grass by the side of the road, they were now high above it, now level with it, and Sylvia was recognized and greeted from many carriages whose occupants bestowed

upon Jean, at her best in hat and habit, curious and admiring glances.

The hills were growing purple instead of blue, and they presently urged their horses to a sharp trot, that twilight might not overtake them on the Campagna. The tide of vehicles was turning, too, and they wished to reach the gate before them.

Some one else came riding toward them from the city, indifferent, as it seemed, to gathering darkness, to miasma or to other dangers; some one, who, meeting and passing them at a hand-gallop and without recognition, nevertheless caused Sylvia to rein in her horse, her cheeks flushing and her voice thrilling as she cried:

"Oh! Was not that?—no, it can't be; he is not here," while she looked eagerly after the retreating rider.

Jean, surprised, had halted too, and had a fleeting vision of a powerful horse flinging out his iron-shod heels in vigorous strides, and of a fine and stately figure, sitting easily and well. But they now put their horses in motion again, Sylvia vouchsafing no explana-

tion beyond the unsatisfactory remark: "I fancied it was an old friend—of mamma's and mine—but I must be mistaken," while her heart was throbbing fast with hopeful anticipation.

Jean's brougham met them at the Porta Pia, where they dismounted and drove rapidly homeward in silence, Jean no doubt a little curious, and Sylvia in a happy dream. Mrs. Wyndham lay on a sofa when they entered, and Sylvia's bright face fell as she saw how pale and suffering she looked.

"Mother!" she cried, with a sudden, unreasoning dread, "are you not well? What is it? Not the fever?"

"Nothing, my child, but one of my old attacks," said Mrs. Wyndham, speaking with difficulty. "More painful than dangerous, only I can not go out, and I am so sorry to deprive you of your ball to-night. Is there no one with whom you could go? The Wentworths, or—"

"Oh, mother! I can't leave you," cried Sylvia, adding, with a sudden remembrance of some strong reason she had for wishing to go,

"At least, I *would* like to go so much, but not if you are ill."

"My sweet child," said Mrs. Wyndham, drawing the bright face down to kiss it fondly. "You must go by all means. I never saw you look so pretty, Sylvia. I wish you to go. Think of some one."

"So that the public may be convinced that your goose is really a swan; eh, mamma, dear?" laughed Sylvia, blushing over the motherly compliment. "The Wentworths are four already," she went on, deliberating. "But, mamma, as it is a public ball, a charity ball, perhaps Mrs. Grandison would take your ticket and go with me, if you do not mind."

Mrs. Wyndham thought rapidly and earnestly for a moment. To trust her child to Jean on such an occasion was to indorse most strongly a woman who was in reality an absolute stranger to her, but in addition to her own increasing liking for Jean, was her confidence in Sylvia's instincts, and the certainty she felt that her daughter's friendship for Jean would not have survived the test of the long visit to

Manycotes had Mrs. Grandison proved in the least degree unworthy of it.

"Yes," she said, after a short pause, for this considering had been rapidly done. "Go and ask Mrs. Grandison. Say I shall be much indebted if she will take you."

Can it be doubted that Jean received this message with pride and pleasure? "It has come!" she thought. "I am sought, and valued—the way to attain is open to me. I shall no longer be ignored and of no importance."

But outwardly she was rather indifferent, parrying Sylvia's eager entreaties with an amused smile.

"My dear little girl," she said, "I would like to be of service to you, but I have been so long out of the way of these things." This statement, at least, was strictly true.

"Oh! Mrs. Grandison!" cried Sylvia. "Do not, *pray* do not disappoint me! I have set my heart on going to this ball with the handsomest woman in Rome."

"Little goose!" said Jean, coloring with pleasure, while Sylvia interjected ruefully,

"There! I told mamma her swan was a goose."

"Don't think to win me by flattery," went on Jean, pretending to be perverse and say nay, after the fashion of Juliet. "However, I will not be so cruel after all my protestations, as to refuse the first thing you have ever asked me. I suppose," she added, meditatively, "that the gown in which Forbes painted me would do."

"Oh! Mrs. Grandison! you are always perfectly dressed. Then I may say to mamma that you will go? She will be so pleased."

And, after a caress like a butterfly's touch, Sylvia danced away, radiant, little thinking that she left the outwardly calm Jean in an almost equal flutter of agitated anticipation of what was actually *her first ball.*

CHAPTER XIV.

"False face must hide what the false heart doth know."

NOW, as it is only in novels, and those of a somewhat antiquated pattern, that the lovely but unknown heroine, appearing unheralded in a ball-room, finds herself at once the "cynosure of all eyes," besieged for dances, mobbed by admirers and exalted in a single evening to the place of belle of the season—it may readily be believed that all of Jean's somewhat sanguine anticipations were not, on this occasion, realized. This, her first ball, however, did play a sufficiently important part in her life, and the honorable secrecy to be observed toward the reader who does not care to have the pages of his book labeled for him, will molt no feather, if the leading events of the night are here set down.

That Jean would look well was a foregone conclusion. Excitement was life to her, and she knew very well that the "gown in which

Forbes had painted her" was the most becoming she could put on. Sylvia's perverse prettiness, however, had deserted her; some anxiety, openly expressed, for her mother's health—some secret misgiving lest, after all, that passing glimpse should have deceived her and all she hoped of the ball should not be fulfilled, robbed her cheek of its bloom, and in spite of a charming white gown *en style* Watteau, Sylvia did not look her best.

Ian Forbes, who was far beyond caring whether Sylvia looked well or ill, seeing that, under all circumstances, she was to him the sweetest creature the sun shone on, was eagerly watching for her, and his surprise and pleasure were great at seeing Jean—for whom he had a genuine affection—with her. Kooystra, who was considered so "odd" that nothing he chose to do excited remark, devoted himself to Jean in so marked a manner as almost to make up for the absence of those eager suitors and awed admirers whom Jean, in her visions, had seen bowing before her. His constant presence gave her, at least, a pleasant sense of being cared for, and his comment, wise

and witty, his *chronique scandaleuse*, made up the best part of what was almost a lonely evening. A few fashionable women inquired who the woman with the magnificent rivière might be, for Jean's diamonds not having had the ill-luck to be worn with crape, had emerged from their seclusion, like their owner from hers, with enhanced brilliancy. One or two of Forbes' friends, more observant than others, presently made the discovery that the stately woman in black with whom he was talking was the original of his "Portrait de Mme. G.," and an animated discussion of this attracted the attention of a lady and gentleman, who, standing in a window recess near the group, had abandoned their conversational attempts either for want of fuel or from the ease of intimacy. That the latter was the case was evident from the glance they exchanged as the bit of gossipy conjecture reached their ears, and the lady said rather eagerly:

"Oh! I was so very pleased with that picture! I should like greatly to see the original."

Her companion, a tall man, whose face had

lit up with quite unusual animation, answered with equal interest:

"Mrs. Grandison! Yes, I am almost sure I should recognize her. Shall we cross the floor, duchess? I think I can point her out to you."

The duchess, who was a small, pale, dowdy woman, with a singularly pleasant and intellectual face, took his offered arm, echoing as they moved away:

"Grandison! do you say? Ah! then I believe I take some little interest in her, more than mere curiosity. Hermione's maid lives with her, and she also bought her horse, Loki."

The duchess rarely mentioned her dead daughter, but this was an old and dear friend.

"I wonder what Grandison it is?" he said, musingly. "Do you happen to know?"

"Let me see," said the duchess. "I think I remember—Saint something—yes, her card was Mrs. E. St. George Grandison."

"Then," said her companion, "I also am directly interested, for I believe I knew her husband."

Somewhat later in the evening, Jean,

amused, contented, enjoying herself in spite of not having made the sensation she had dreamed of—with Kooystra beside her doing his best to interest her—saw Sylvia approaching, with Ian Forbes beside her, and leaning upon the arm of another *beau cavalier*.

"Dear Mrs. Grandison," said Sylvia, stopping before her. "Mr. Forbes and I are quarreling for the privilege of presenting to you our old friend, Colonel Yorke, and it is only by an appeal to the *place aux dames* principle that I have been able to secure my right."

"And while they fall out," said Col. Yorke, bowing low, "I reap the advantage."

"Like a neutral nation in time of war," said Jean, with a smile.

"What a bad omen—for my peace of mind," answered Colonel Yorke. "Are no more auspicious comparisons to be found for the meeting of friendly powers?"

"How tiresome similes are!" said Sylvia, half pettishly. "Pray leave off fencing, before a battle begins in earnest, and be friends at once for my sake."

"Very well," said Jean, extending her hand,

"since you leave us the option of being enemies for our own sakes."

"As for me," said Kooystra, suddenly, "I absolutely decline to play *casus belli* any longer."

"Dear me," said Sylvia, "no one was thinking of you."

"That's precisely it," retorted Kooystra. "I object to being forgotten, as the original cause of a war always is."

There was a general laugh, and the young people moved away, leaving Colonel Yorke at Jean's side, where he contentedly remained until some suspicion of the time of night roused her chaperonic instincts. Kooystra, hovering in Jean's vicinity with a curious, uneasy persistency, undertook to search for Sylvia, but it was quite half-an-hour before that elusive young lady appeared, leaning on the arm of a tall man who made Jean a profound and *empresse* bow.

It was Major Limber.

Jean, no longer in her own house, felt at liberty to behave toward him as she felt, and replied by a scarcely perceptible inclination of

the head, and Sylvia, to whom he had represented his previous acquaintance with her chaperone in the bright colors of a rather sanguine memory, felt a shock of surprise. Major Limber himself, furious, felt again all the intense mortification of the day at Manycotes: the luncheon barely accorded to him at the dictate of hospitality, the promptness with which the carriage came round, that he should by no chance miss the train, the evident satisfaction with which his departure had been accelerated. In his rôle of fortune-hunter, not so very lately adopted, Major Limber had met with many rebuffs; he was not so very thin-skinned; but the scarcely veiled contempt of Jean's manner galled him inexpressibly. He had quickly given up his designs upon her, but to find her in Rome, ready and quite able to combat his latest schemes, was too infuriating.

"I am so glad," said Sylvia, slipping her hand affectionately into Jean's as they drove rapidly homeward through the narrow, echoing streets, "that you like Colonel Yorke!"

CHAPTER XV.

"Your bait of falsehood takes this carp of truth."

THE next morning the excellent Pritchett received through a former fellow-servant, a request to wait upon the Duchess of Saintsbury, and having obtained Jean's permission, presented herself to that lady, whose apartments were in the same hotel, at the appointed hour. The duchess, a quiet, self-contained woman, showed little of the emotion she chokingly felt in seeing one so intimately associated with her dead daughter.

"I hope you like your place, Pritchett," she said, after some brief inquiries as to health.

"Thank your grace," said Pritchett, "I am most comfortable."

"You like Mrs. Grandison?"

"My mistress is most kind."

The duchess hesitated. It was against all her habits and traditions to question a servant,

yet she saw no other road to what she wished to know; so, after some hesitating choice of the most diplomatic words in which to frame her inquiries, she hurried out the most infelicitous.

"Is Mrs. Grandison—ah—a nice person, Pritchett—a lady, I mean. Some one whom I could know?" she said, and then blushed at the snobbishness of the speech.

"Indeed—yes, your grace," answered Pritchett eagerly, her tongue loosed at once by the duchess' embarrassment. "My mistress is quite one of the nicest ladies I ever lived with. The only thing I can say against her—is—she shuts herself up too much."

"Ah!" said the duchess, relieved. "She is not much in society, perhaps."

"It's her own choice," said the faithful Pritchett, eagerly. "Every one wishes and begs her to go out—and she knows none but the very nicest people," with unconscious exaggeration. "But she seemed very unwilling to leave off her mourning and give up her quiet way of life. 'Twas only to please Miss Wyndham, as coaxed her very hard, that she went

to the ball last night. Did your grace happen to see her there?"

"Miss Wyndham, I suppose, was that pretty ladylike girl in white? Yes—I saw them—your mistress is very handsome."

"She has beautiful gowns, and very 'ansome diamonds," said Pritchett, with professional enthusiasm. "Did your grace 'appen to remark the jewels?"

"I did notice a necklace of very fine stones," said the duchess indifferently, though she had nothing among her family jewels half so fine. "Mrs. Grandison must be very rich."

"I couldn't say, madam, *how* rich," said the cautious Pritchett, "because she lives so very quiet and doesn't entertain. At Manycotes she had only maids in the 'ouse; but she 'as beautiful carriages and horses, and a great many more diamonds than she could possibly wear at once, besides other jewels and hornaments, and every thing 'andsome about her," concluded Pritchett, unconsciously plagiarizing.

"Manycotes? What is that?" asked the duchess.

"That's my mistress' place in Somerset.

'Tis very small, but kept beautiful. And her little town-house in Hay Hill, which is let. I was through it myself when my mistress was having it done up, and it is perfect."

"But you say she has very few visitors," said the duchess.

"Very few indeed, your grace. Last winter, which we spent it in Paris, while Mr. Forbes and the Dutch gentleman—as I can't remember his name—were painting 'er portraits, she saw no one but Miss Wyndham and the two gentlemen, and them never alone. Miss Wyndham was always there."

"Ah!" said the duchess. "I like Mrs. Grandison's appearance very much, and I am pleased to hear you are with such a nice person. Thank you, Pritchett, and that will do."

Thus dismissed, Pritchett courtesied and retired, having satisfied the duchess' curiosity and given an account of her mistress which was strictly true, very misleading, and which conveyed the precise impression which Jean desired to produce.

The immediate consequence of the interview was that Jean, in one of her rare appearances in

the *salon*, was waylaid by the duchess, who introduced herself in a most flattering manner and made minute inquiries whether she were pleased with Loki and Pritchett.

"Was your husband one of the Kentish Grandisons or the Yorkshire family, Mrs. Grandison?" she presently inquired, with that air of amiably taking an interest in you which is supposed to be flattering. Jean, whose fears had long since gone out to meet this question, was able to answer with sufficient calmness.

"They are Yorkshire people," she said. "Grandison of Temple Grandison and Danesfort."

"Ah," said the duchess. "Pretty places I believe. I know the other Grandisons, the Kentish ones. There is a distant connection I think."

Jean felt a thrill of relief, but feeling the necessity of stemming the tide of questions, took a bold step.

"I do not know Mr. Grandison's family," she said, in a voice which trembled slightly. The call upon her courage and self-control gave a certain haughtiness to her manner, which the

duchess interpreted—not at all to her disadvantage, as the sign of some resentment which Jean had a perfect right to entertain, and so, not to appear intrusive, quitted the subject, and presently left her with a gracious intimation that she did not intend to let their acquaintance drop.

More remote consequences made themselves manifest from day to day. A handsome widow, who wore superb diamonds and had the prettiest turn-out in Rome, and who, moreover, was often seen in familiar converse with an indisputable duchess, must be a person to know. The embassy of her native land returned her call with much *empressement*, the embassy of the duchess' country contrived to meet her, and adopted her, "on her late husband's account." The "best" people sought, in all legitimate ways, to become acquainted with her, and but few weeks went by before Jean found herself "in the swim" and entirely without fears of harm from the iron pots among which she was gayly bobbing down-stream.

The magic influence of the Duchess of Saintsbury's friendship did not end here,

though the duchess herself went southward at the New Year. But before she left she had learned that Jean meant to return to America and to establish herself for always in her native land; also that Jean did not know any of the duchess' many American friends.

"I have been so long a wanderer," said Jean, in her soft, regretful tones. "My poor mother was such an invalid and led a secluded life even when we were at home. My girlhood was all passed abroad. There is nothing to draw me back—no ties, no attraction. But I can not cease to feel myself an American—and it seems to me a duty not to expatriate myself and forfeit my birthright."

These admirable sentiments pleased the duchess greatly, and Colonel Yorke, who was of the conversation, bestowed on Jean one of the approving smiles which he was in the habit of giving Sylvia, but which afterward struck him as rather a puerile offering for this stately woman of the world. Jean was not too much absorbed by the duchess to fail to observe how handsome he looked when he smiled, but she could spare little time for this reflection from

the graver issues in hand. For the duchess, a woman of strong convictions and very patriotic herself, was much pleased with this somewhat unusual manifestation of Americanism, which won her much more than any attempt Jean could have made to identify herself with her husband's country; and she was now offering to Jean letters of introduction to two of the friends who had entertained her so kindly in America, and who kept her so constantly reminded of their continuing affection that she could not doubt the welcome they would extend to any friend of hers. Sweet Sylvia Wyndham, taking to herself much credit for Jean's auspicious first appearance, was delighted with her subsequent success. Mrs. Wyndham had been glad to cede her duties as chaperone, and they went out a great deal together, yet for some reason they were not as intimate as they had been. It could not be said that any coolness existed between them; there was no jealousy in Sylvia's sweet nature, of the unvarying beauty which so constantly outshone the young girl's fitful prettiness; and Jean loved to see her gay, admired, surrounded.

Still, though their days were spent much alike, in that busy idleness of the Roman pleasure-seeker, a distance had grown between. Jean, in Kooystra's company, or with Colonel Yorke's thoughtful comments, had fallen into the spirit of the place, studying lovingly the art which Sylvia seemed to have forgotten amid the assiduities of Major Limber and Ian Forbes' hopeless faithfulness; and Sylvia's conscience, pricking her for her neglect, drove her willfully in the wrong direction.

CHAPTER XVI.

"It has been said, that men love with their eyes, women with their ears."

AN Americanized Englishman does, as a rule, one of two things. He retains his prejudices and his insularity, enlarging the latter to correspond with the size of the great country he has adopted: or he becomes more aggressively American than the Americans, affiliating himself to the wild Western type, grafting the accent of the cowboy upon his native drawl, and delighting in that picturesque, if startling, use of language which constitutes "American slang."

Keppel Yorke, before naturalizing himself in America, was already too cosmopolitan to fall into either of these classes. He had long ceased to be conspicuously British, retaining nothing of his birthright save the inflections of a singularly pleasant voice; and the tastes of a *litterateur* and man of the world, which had

demanded a wider horizon and greater pecuniary resources, had not lost their sway during necessary sojourns on ranches and in the uncultured neighborhood of silver mines. They had survived the chances and changes of an adventurous and wandering life, which had left him such an unusual number of illusions of youth, as, upon reflection, surprised even himself. He was continually believing in women up to a certain point, and as continually being disappointed; but disappointment had so far failed to shake that belief in himself which is at the bottom of human happiness. In person he was that delight of lady-novelists, an ugly handsome man; not noticeably taller than other men, yet appearing to advantage among them and beside a stately woman like Jean. His dark hair was slightly gray and furtively retreating from a fine brow; his eyes, brown and rather close together, were gentle and penetrating, and a thick brownish-red beard kept the secret of whatever weakness mouth and chin might have revealed.

To a pessimist like Jean, who, to the belief Kooystra had once expressed that no one is

happy after forty, added her private conviction that few are happy before, it was an era to meet a man like Colonel Yorke, who had lived a full life for these fatal forty years and more and who yet looked upon the world, if not as the best of all possible worlds, at least as a very tolerable abiding-place, and as making satisfactory progress toward perfection. It was a change from Kooystra's fitful alternations of irresponsible high spirits and moods of callow cynicism, from Forbes' growing despondency, and from Sylvia's buoyant spirits, which Jean felt to be the mere evanescent characteristic of her youth.

And yet it could not be said that Jean and Colonel Yorke had become friends. At the end of three months they were still upon the footing of mere acquaintance, though they met often and were cordially inclined toward each other. Mrs. Wyndham had been Colonel Yorke's first friend in America, her small, simple home had welcomed him with unpretentious hospitality. Sylvia had made much of him, after the fashion of an enthusiastic girl thrown for the first time with a clever and cultivated

man older than herself. And now, meeting these kind friends of the old days, in Rome, he felt himself at home with them, and privileged to come and go as he pleased.

But whether it were that Sylvia, in her newly-widened experience, had found others as attractive as Colonel Yorke had once seemed, or that the increasing number of her admirers had crowded him out of his place in her favor —their frank friendship appeared at an end. He came and went as he had done in the American home, but Sylvia no longer confided to him her dreams and hopes, nor appealed for the advice which it is sweetest flattery to see followed.

As for Jean, she had not yet sufficiently overcome her long habits of reserve and diffidence, well dissembled but still powerful, to make advances toward intimacy with any one of more pretention than the boyish artists with whom much companionship had placed her entirely at her ease.

So Colonel Yorke's visits seemed entirely to belong to Mrs. Wyndham, as his most assiduous attention certainly did, while both Jean

and Sylvia played the part of attentive, appreciative, but rather unresponsive listeners, on whom the enunciation of Colonel Yorke's well-expressed ideas produced little visible effect. It may be questioned, however, whether the small and backward plant of Jean's patriotism had not expanded and blossomed in the bracing air of Colonel Yorke's enthusiasm for America.

As for Sylvia, the possession of an intimate friend in Jean might have accounted for much of the distance which now divided her from Colonel Yorke, had it not been for the daily increasing reserve she displayed toward Jean. Mrs. Wyndham regretted this estrangement, for her liking for Jean was quietly sincere. Jean felt it keenly, puzzling her memory for the word or act which might have wounded her, and watching wistfully for the opportunity of being again at one with this her first friend.

Sylvia, suffering also from their unexplained coolness, knew that in some dark corner of her heart the reason was waiting to be questioned, and willfully ignored its presence.

One glorious March day they had driven

together to a meet of the fox-hounds at Sette Celli; they had seen the fox arrive on a gray pony, his bright eyes peering at them through the chinks in his wicker basket; had seen the amiable brigand in pointed hat and long, green-lined cloak who handled both pony and basket, ride away to enlarge the fox at a distance; had seen the hounds laid on, after due "law" had been allowed, the riders take the field; and at last had started homeward by an adventurous round-about way across the Campagna, which brought them out on the Via Appia just beyond the Metella tomb. Along this road they were bowling swiftly away from Rome; the little black horses, driven without bits, in the Roman fashion, the reins being attached to a brass bar across their noses—stepping as swiftly, with the light victoria at their heels, as if they had just left their stable.

Jean and Sylvia rode in silence, the elder woman furtively watching the girl's face, who sat gazing pensively across the great, green undulating plain over which their road led. The cheek turned toward Jean was a little pale, the mouth had a wistful droop, and some-

thing in the glimpse of lid and eyelash suggested eyes full of unshed tears.

"It has been a happy winter," said Jean, at last, turning her eyes upon the freshening green, the new thick-springing flowers, and all the signs of spring.

"Yes," said Sylvia, turning to Jean with a smile as uncertain as the shadow of a cloud flying far across the purple hills. "Or, no! I hardly know which. In some ways it has been most delightful—in so many ways most disappointing."

"Perhaps," said Jean, rather sadly, "it is because I have learned to expect nothing from life, that I have enjoyed these months so much. Good-fortune has smiled upon me for the first time. I have never been so happy before. I came, only thinking to wear out another dull winter, like all that have gone before, making it less forlorn by being near you and your mother." This was not strictly true, but Jean believed it for the moment. "I fancied you would be too much engrossed to be much with me. I little hoped for such a winter as I have spent."

"Have I not often told you," said Sylvia, fondly, "you were never meant to shut yourself up. The life of such a woman as you are is owed to society; you have no right to rob it."

"Little flatterer," said Jean, "what would my winter have been without you? And now, my Sylvia, I hear you sigh—you speak of disappointment. How it grieves me! Tell me, Sylvia, what can I—what *may* I do?"

Sylvia's eyes were full of tears.

"Oh!" she said, faltering. "If it depended on you, dear Mrs. Grandison, I should be happier than I deserve. It is my own fault—partly—no! altogether. Oh! why have I wasted my winter!" she cried, with what seemed distress. "I meant to live for my art alone! And here, for a little gayety, a little pleasure, and dancing, I have deserted it! Oh! it is my own fault!"

"Art is a gentle mistress," said Jean gravely, looking earnestly at her. "Neglect does not estrange her. But this is not all, dear Sylvia; there is something else, tell me."

Her voice was infinitely soft and persuasive; Sylvia's eyes met hers in eloquent, mute con-

fession, and were quickly turned away, as if, even without words, they might tell too much.

"Dear child," said Jean, with a tightening of the chords of her own throat; then hastily glanced about to see if she might say more; but they had turned and were rapidly approaching the city gates. San Paolo fuori le Mura was in sight; some carriages and a horseman were coming toward them, and it was with a complete change of tone and manner that Jean went on:

"Relieve my mind on one point, Sylvia—tell me—oh! assure me that it is not Major Limber."

She spoke lightly, but in her heart she felt afraid; she dreaded to think what strides he might have made in these weeks when she had been comparatively little with Sylvia. But Sylvia's tone was as light as her own, though her voice trembled.

"Accept my solemn assurances, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it is not Major Limber!"

They both laughed, Jean with a wonderful sense of relief; and in a moment Sylvia added,

telling one of those gratuitous, unaccountable untruths which spring to the lips of the truest woman at such times: "It is no one here."

"You take a weight from my heart," replied Jean. "Here comes Colonel Yorke; how well he rides!"

Sylvia was conquering a laugh which was half a sob, and did not answer at once, but she turned her face with its accustomed smile to Colonel Yorke and talked gayly to him as he rode beside the carriage until it entered the narrow and tortuous streets which lead from the Porta San Sebastiano to the Corso.

"The child is in love," Jean was thinking to herself, entirely disregarding the last statement, of which, as a woman, she was quite able to estimate the value. "And if not with Major Limber, I wonder with whom. Forbes it can not be; he is too openly her slave to leave room for doubts and fears. Can it be that incomprehensible boy, Kooystra? He is ugly, but attractive in his way, and so odd—he might conceal a genuine passion under that *insouciant* manner. And so proud—her money would keep him silent."

CHAPTER XVII.

"Thou wouldst as soon go kindle fire with snow,
As seek to quench the fire of love with words."

JEAN pondered long on this point, and became more and more convinced of the correctness of her conjecture. Nothing else seemed at all probable, and like every one with a preconceived conviction, each little incident seemed to her confirmation strong. That Kooystra was more silent and thoughtful than his wont, that he spent every available hour with Jean—"I am not the rose," she thought, "but I have been near the rose,"—that he lavished upon her the attentions it seemed natural to suppose he would offer Sylvia; nothing, in Jean's eyes, but went to prove her hypothesis.

Some days after, Kooystra spent a rainy afternoon in Jean's *salon*, where the two young men made themselves much at home, coming and going as they chose, idling about over

books or music, and talking or not, as they felt inclined. Paul was in an unusually sunshiny mood, content, apparently, with himself and his fortunes, and even, for a wonder, with the good-fortune of others, and Jean, having gently scolded him for his idleness, without disturbing his equanimity, felt that the moment was propitious.

"Do you know," she began, "I do not think you have treated us hospitably, you and Mr. Forbes."

"No!" cried Kooystra. "What a reproach! How distressed I am that you should have it to say of us! But it is all Forbes' fault; he is a hermit. My palace and baronial halls are *a sus pies*. I hereby invite you to reign over them. But Forbes! how can I reinstate him in your good graces?"

"Why," said Jean, only perfunctorily smiling, for she took every thing *au serieux*, and her comprehension was apt to lag far behind even the halting jokes which Sylvia and Kooystra seemed to find so delicious. "We are told that you have a characteristic Roman studio somewhere in a very picturesque part of the town."

"Piazza Sta Maria del Pianto," suggested Kooystra.

"—Yet Sylvia and I," went on Jean, "who came to Rome dreaming of studios, have never been asked to see it."

"Well, if a dirty attic with a tile floor is a characteristic Roman studio," said Kooystra, with a laugh, "we certainly have one, and you and Miss Wyndham will be as welcome there—as winter sunshine—an expression which I consider vastly superior to 'flowers in May.' It has never occurred to us that it was worth showing to any one. But I suppose," he went on saucily, looking Sylvia, who at this moment entered the room, full in the face, "I suppose you have the usual woman's craving for 'Bohemianism' and 'unconventionality.' I am convinced Miss Wyndham here, only became an artist in hopes of spending every evening at the Caffe' Greco and smoking a short black pipe."

"In fact," said Sylvia calmly, "I cherished a hope of becoming a sort of M. Kooystra in petticoats, until I found you deteriorate so, on close acquaintance!" Jean looked astonish-

ment. These two young people in their chaffing mood were incomprehensible to her, but Kooystra turned to her, and with a total change of tone extended an invitation to spend an evening of the following week at the world-famous studio of MM. Forbes and Kooystra —which Jean accepted with the proviso that Major Limber should not be asked.

"Major Limber, indeed!" said Kooystra. "I hope I am not so lost to all sense of the fitness of things."

There was a little more banter and then Kooystra left, putting his head in at the door to inquire whether the supper was to be a characteristic one, too, in which case it must consist of Chianti, *salsiccia* and *formaggio*, eaten in an atmosphere of smoke thick enough to cut with a knife.

In due time the invitations came, daintily sketched on leaves of the vellum in which Roman books are bound: quaint emanations of Kooystra's whimsical fancy, each varied to suit the tastes of the recipient. Jean was seen between her dog and her horse. Sylvia's sweet face looked out from amid clouds of smoke

on which appeared shadowy visions of artists' life in Rome. Sylvia herself, cigarette in mouth, hob-nobbing with impossibly beautiful and brigandish artists at the Greco, or sketching ideal peasants, or presiding over the Spring Festa of the artists, in a bewitching costume of Folly.

It was such a jest as is only possible between friends who thoroughly understand each other, but to Jean, with her utter lack of humor, the daring and the audacity of the thing seemed only possible on one hypothesis. Her theory, pretty firmly fixed by this time, was strengthened, on the legal principle of "cy-près," by Mrs. Wyndham's invitation. She could not understand the feeling with which this motherless boy regarded the sweet-natured, tender woman, who seemed to him the embodiment of motherhood. Her own experience had not prepared her for such loving recognition of a type, and she fancied it was only as Sylvia's mother that he had drawn her, in a sort of apotheosis of mother love.

Mrs. Wyndham had had a happy youth, and the sorrows of later years had not made her

forget that she had ever been young, but had given her the conviction that young people should be happy at all costs. This conviction she brought to bear on Sylvia's life, thinking no sacrifice too great or too small to sweeten and beautify it. To use Sylvia's own words, she preferred her mother to any other chaperone, because she never told her it was time to go home. A sense of this tenderness, this impulse of love and protection drew every creature toward the pale lady on her couch, and as,to Sylvia, no day was complete without a few minutes in the vast peace of St. Peter's, so Forbes, Kooystra, and even Colonel Yorke sought Mrs. Wyndham's presence as a sort of refuge against the cares which infest the day, and Jean felt, without realizing it, the softening influence of her character.

On Wednesday evening, at nine o'clock, Jean and Sylvia found themselves in the brougham, rolling rapidly through the narrow, echoing streets toward the Piazza Sta Maria del Pianto. Their hosts met them at the door of the Cortile, and escorted them up the long flights of stone stairs, which were unusually

clean, and were lighted, by their care and contrivance, with paper lanterns on every flight.

"And now," said Kooystra, with a mischievous look, as they at last reached, after a weary climb, a green door over which the names of the two young men were scrawled, "Now for a characteristic Roman studio."

They entered, and were obliged to acknowledge that the large room with its wide north window, was at the top of the house, and had a tiled floor; beyond this there was little coincidence with Kooystra's description. There was a deep fireplace in which sticks of wood placed on end blazed merrily, and the room was filled with the soft light of the pretty fluted candles peculiar to Rome, which Forbes had insisted upon substituting for the antique lamps upon which Kooystra had set his heart. Ropes of smilax wreathed the sketches on the walls, and a picture on Forbes' easel, a woman's head, dark, noble and severe, but all these evidences of industry were on one side of the studio. On Kooystra's side was only the Valkyr-like portrait of Jean, unframed and unadorned.

Jean and Sylvia laid aside their wraps, look-

ing about them with eyes eager to be pleased, and the young men hung about them, their hearts stirred with the strange, sweet thrill no man can help but feel who sees for the first time the woman he loves, not at her fireside, but his own. Colonel Yorke, watching the "young people" from the vantage ground of his forty years, envying them their youth and promise and freshness of feeling, thought, with a sigh, that were he but a few years younger he should be puzzled which to woo: Sylvia, with her changeful charm of coloring and expression, or Jean, of the gracious and stately beauty and serene reserve. But neither sentiment nor music were to be the food of love this evening. Kooystra was in his maddest mood; he followed with mischievous mocking comment as Sylvia moved about the room, in the way women have where they feel at ease: touching, examining, admiring this and that, and rendering forever sacred—to one at least, the commonplace properties of his daily life. She had circled about and politely tried to ignore a table somewhat ostentatiously set forth with every requisite of porcelain, glass,

and silver, until, with a shriek of delighted laughter, she suddenly discovered the nature of the feast.

This consisted of hard-boiled eggs and slices of "*salsiccia*" cunningly fashioned, as Roman workmen know how, from *giallo* and *breccia* and variously colored marbles, spoils of ruined Rome; of heaped up grapes whose purple translucence had been gathered where amethysts grow, and shaped into the pretty paper-weights Italian travelers remember; and further, of roses and smilax, windflowers and violets, and nothing more.

"The characteristic supper!" cried Sylvia "How delicious! No wonder the poor fellows are so thin."

Even Jean, who lacked that sense of the ridiculous, which, next to true religion and a good digestion, is the best shield against the ills of life, could not but join in the merriment which followed this discovery.

"How nice it is to be entertained!" said Sylvia, sinking into an easy chair before the fire. "Go on, gentlemen; amuse us. We have been hostesses so much it is a treat

to feel that some one else is responsible now."

"Kooystra," said Forbes, "thought his duty was done when he had provided something to eat and drink—"

"Forbes, having only thought it necessary to supply this table," interrupted Kooystra, pointing to the marble viands.

"He secretly expected you to entertain us," concluded Forbes.

"You may look at us," said Sylvia archly. "Beyond that I decline to contribute to the evening's programme."

"M. Kooystra will sing to us," said Jean.

"And Colonel Yorke will tell us a ghost-story," added Kooystra.

"I have always believed Colonel Yorke to be a man of dark experiences," said Sylvia gravely, while Jean gave her a glance of surprise.

This programme was joyously carried out. There were songs and a wild tale of adventure from Colonel Yorke, supplemented by some weird ghost-stories of Kooystra's. But first there was a dainty little supper, such as Por-

firio might have spread for Madeline; the rose-decked wine flasks which stood all a-row on the piano and the high chimney-shelf, were opened, and perhaps Chianti and Lacrima and Monte Pulciano, added a little to the spirit of song and story, and to the sparkle of the jesting talk.

To Jean it was incomprehensible, yet infectious, this mad, merry and most innocent nonsense, which kept her less flexible wits in a state of bewilderment over the swift repartee of the young people. She felt more at her ease with Colonel Yorke, though he, too, had a "merry devil" in his dark eyes; and their acquaintance prospered that evening as it had not done before.

It grew late and Jean bethought herself of her duties as chaperone; she rose to go, but Sylvia lingered talking to Colonel Yorke, and willing to wait her pleasure, Jean moved about the room in quiet impatience. On the ledge of a small, quaint cabinet in which Kooystra bestowed his paints, lay a tiny box of Japanese metal work. Jean took it up, absently turning it over, examining the exquisitely

fine inlaying, and searching for its secret spring.

"That," said Forbes, approaching them from the fire, "is Kooystra's fetish, Mrs. Grandison. He carries his life about in that little box, so that when he says to a woman, 'I would lay down my life for you,' it may be no empty boast."

A shade of annoyance crossed Kooystra's face.

"You mistake," he said, in his usual tone, if any thing could be called usual in one so variable. "I have only—in case the fates bestow upon me a scolding wife—provided a way of escape."

"A flight from the ills we know to those we know not, eh, Kooystra?" said Colonel Yorke, turning toward them.

"A coward's courage, in fact," said Sylvia, not in the least knowing what they were talking of, but rushing in at random in defense of her sex. "Why do men think a 'scolding wife' is sufficient excuse for any thing they may do? You never hear women excusing suicide or dissipation on the plea of a scolding husband."

"We can call a man who ill-treats his wife a brute, Miss Wyndham, but we must not apply any adjective harsher than scolding to a woman who ill-treats her husband," said Kooystra, quizzically.

"Well, my idea is, it needn't be all so one-sided," said Forbes. "I don't believe the man is *always* to blame in an unhappy marriage—though I own women are vastly better than we are."

"Thanks for the admission," said Sylvia, mockingly; "and so, because we *are* so much better, we are to do all the forgiving and peace-making for both."

"Marriage is, or should be, a contract binding two people to forbearance for each other," quoted Colonel Yorke, thoughtfully.

"There," said Sylvia, with a grateful glance, "Colonel Yorke always puts in words what I can only think."

"Whereas, practically," said Kooystra, "marriage generally turns out to be a contract binding two people to aggravate each other to the verge of endurance and beyond."

"Well," said Forbes, philosophically, his feel-

ings soothed by a lengthened and stealthy contemplation of Sylvia's lovely, eager face, "We are wasting our words talking of what none of us know any thing about, except, of course, Mrs. Grandison."

Kooystra, whose eyes, as often happened, were fixed upon Jean, saw a swift change pass over her serene face—a startled, hunted look, strangely like that of the portrait near which she stood; a strong effort kept the smile on her quivering lips, and she spoke in an odd, strained voice.

"It is a question never to be solved by discussion," she said, laying down the tiny box which she had been absently holding. "And indeed it is too late to begin any discussions now. Sylvia, we must go."

She was trembling in every limb; and while Sylvia put on her wraps, she turned away from the light and approached the cabinet, again taking up the bit of inlaid metal, and saying in a low tone to Kooystra:

"I scarcely understand; tell me, M. Kooystra, what is in this box?"

Kooystra smiled, and taking it from her,

touched the spring, and revealed a tiny, tear-shaped phial containing a few drops of some colorless liquid.

"It is as Forbes told you," he said. "My life is there. That is hydrocyanic acid; instant death when life shall be no longer worth living."

His tone was curiously bitter and a sigh half escaped him. Jean looked at him earnestly.

"How wrong, how foolish!" she said, feeling a great anxiety for this pleasant, fantastic, unstable fellow, of whose strange moods she had some experience. "Pray forget such ideas, and, M. Kooystra—" she added, urged by some strong impulse of friendliness—"give it to me, I beg." She held out her hand, looking gravely and earnestly at him. Kooystra met her glance eagerly. His eyes searched hers. Had Jean had more of a certain kind of womanliness she must have known the meaning of that look; but she only felt that her influence or her will had swayed him, as he placed the box in her hand, and led her silently to her carriage.

Forbes, returned from watching the retreat-

ing wheels of his fair, lit a contemplative pipe with a coal from the fire, while Kooystra, who had many womanish ways, moved softly about, putting this and that away, and turning Forbes' sketches to the wall. Before his own picture of Jean he paused, fixing on it a questioning, moody gaze.

"Forbes," he said presently, "you remember I told you she could look like that? Well, I have seen the look to-night."

"What a gratifying proof of your perspicacity, old fellow!" said Forbes lazily.

Kooystra turned abruptly toward him.

"I wish I had never seen her," he burst out. "I wish my hand had withered before I had painted her! She has bewitched me, and yet she ignores me. Tell me, Forbes, how can such an infatuation exist, sapping my manhood, my ambition, and all for a woman who has never even tried to attract me. A woman," he added more slowly, "whom I don't believe in. She is afraid of something—she has something to conceal—or she could never look as she looked to-night."

"And yet you gave her your life, as you

call it, just now," said Forbes, stopping to poke at his pipe with his knife-blade. "Bah! Kooystra, you're bilious, or you've had too much Chianti. I'll own you're an unusually bad case. I'll even acknowledge you're 'desperately in love,' if the phraseology suits you better; but all this nonsense about her ruining your life, just comes from the liver. You were born to be great, and great you will be. *I* believe in you, if no one else does, and I believe in Mrs. Grandison too, very cordially—but she's not worth the sacrifice of such a life as yours; few women are."

"Mental reservation in favor of one," muttered Kooystra.

"And I'm not sure but it's my duty," went on Forbes severely, "to thrash you for using disrespectful language of her, if I didn't know it's mere dyspepsia. Come, smoke a pipe and have a good night's rest. If you don't change your mind I dare say you can persuade her to have you; and then, perhaps, you'll live happy ever after."

Kooystra gave a short laugh. "Thank you, Forbes," he said; "you're a good fellow. I

know you think me more than half mad sometimes. You should be glad I've put temptation out of my way at last. If that damned little box were under my hand to-night, I don't know but that I should have the courage—or the cowardice—to use it."

CHAPTER XVIII.

"Oh! while you live, tell truth and shame the devil."

JEAN and Sylvia drove silently homeward together, neither one altogether content, both brooding over what they thought the injustices of life. It was Jean's habitual mood, but for Sylvia it was something new; the vast moonlit spaces where the fountains flashed, the narrow ways between dark high houses into which they rolled, oppressed her with a sense of helplessness; for the first time she felt the agony of wild, useless revolt against the inevitable.

Jean, still holding the tiny box in her clasp, was thinking, with a return of her accustomed bitterness, how no one was free from care; even their gay young host—madly merry as Kooystra showed himself—had place in his nature for the strange despair into which she once more felt herself falling. For Jean's un-

easy vanity was not content with what she had gained; her moody sensitiveness could not believe in the reality of the friendships offered her. Already she felt a scorn of the admiration and power she had now in right of her beauty, her money, her position; she craved something more intimate: a response to the best part of herself—the highest in that complex nature which she never tired of studying. And even this girl beside her, she thought, has her own griefs—and she put out her hand in the darkness to clasp Sylvia's.

"Oh! Mrs. Grandison," sighed the girl, "do you think every one is unhappy, every one in the whole world?"

Jean could scarcely answer, so deep a pity came over her for the girl to whom life had been so bright, that at the first shadow over her path she fancied she was entering the blackness of darkness forever.

"Dear Sylvia," she said at last, "I think sometimes young people are more unhappy, suffer more from their griefs than older ones, they are so eager, so hopeful. Every disappointment is such a shock. My youth was an

unhappy one. I try to hope my middle life may be happier."

"Ah!" said Sylvia. "If it *is* so—and yet I have seen old people sad too—it is because they have ceased to hope, and have taught themselves to expect nothing of life but material comforts and intellectual pleasures."

"That seems to me rather a comfortable programme," said Jean, with a somewhat rueful smile. "I look for little—yet I enjoy life very much, now."

"Oh! but to give up all thought of any thing higher!" cried Sylvia. "To narrow one's demands to such bounds, to lose ambition—purpose—love."

"My child, you are too young to give these up as lost so soon."

"I know, I know," said Sylvia, speaking fast and low. "I am humiliated; it makes me miserable to find myself so dominated by any thing intangible. A fancy—a feeling—" her voice died away in a sob. "Oh! I had thought better things of myself; the worst is, to have given my heart unsought."

Jean was silent, only clasping fondly the

little cold hand in her warm strong one, for words seemed meaningless and useless.

"Understand me," said Sylvia presently, in a firmer voice. "It is only my luckless fancy I am ashamed of, not the one I——he is the best, the worthiest."

Can this be Kooystra, thought Jean, with dismay; for fond as she was of the young fellow, she could not think him worthy of this passion of love and pain, and she trembled for the awakening from such a dream.

"If I knew, but I don't ask to know," she said, "perhaps I could help you; but in any case the best thing is to live your own life, with your art and your purpose, as if this had never come into it. It is the only way to lessen the sting. I don't say you will forget, some women never can." (This was a kind of paulo-post-futuro wisdom on Jean's part.) "But perhaps all may come right for you."

"Ah! no," answered Sylvia. "I don't look for that. I mean to conquer it, but I can never feel that I have done wrong. I am proud in one way to have loved, ever so hopelessly, a man like——"

A name hovered on her lips, and Jean listened with strained attention, but the carriage turned sharply, clattering and thundering under the archway of the hotel. A sleepy "portier" flung open the door, the footman drew out the fur rug, and Sylvia's secret was left untold.

There was a handful of letters for each, and Sylvia took hers to Jean's room to read, but the impulse of confidence had passed; things looked differently in the fire and candle-light of Jean's cozy *salon*. They read their letters in silence. One note of Sylvia's she handed over to Jean's perusal; it was from Major Limber—a clever note—of a cordial, not to say gushing style, earnestly urging some plan which for a few days would throw him much in Sylvia's company.

"I had no idea you and Major Limber were so intimate," said Jean, rather coldly, as she handed back the note.

"Oh! intimate!" said Sylvia; "the man is well enough, clever, amusing, superficial, a good dancer. I don't feel specially drawn to him."

Jean, left alone, reflected long, sitting over her fire, which she fed absently, taking a sort of mechanical pleasure in placing the logs and coaxing them into flame. Clever, superficial, amusing. Ah! yes. And Sylvia was in just the mood when a clever man with a show of devotion might gain what the winner's hand put by. Jean had before been hardly conscious of the depth of her dislike to the man, but now it all came back upon her in a rush of recollected bitterness: the fall on board ship, the man who had stared at her on the Folkestone pier, the unwelcome attentions in London, the visit forced upon her at Manycotes; trifles all, but with some natures such trifles dwell forever in the memory to sting and imbitter. To do Jean justice, she now knew the man for what he really was: an adventurer, unprincipled, base; and no woman, with such knowledge, could see a girl like Sylvia fall, unwarned, into his power.

She rose, at last, putting by these thoughts with an effort, and as she unfastened the lace at her throat, there fell from among the flowers on her bosom Kooystra's fetish, the tiny box

with its death-dealing contents. "Poor fellow!" she thought; "so he is unhappy, too. Well, at least, I shall have done one good deed in my day." And she locked it away in her jewel-case, smiling over the boy's extravagance of feeling and of words. She had a cordial affection for Kooystra, such as women of thirty-five are apt to feel for younger men who admire them, and whom they are fond of calling "boys," but all her fondness failed to discern the charm requisite to make him the object of Sylvia's hapless fancy.

The next day Sylvia, restored apparently to her wonted spirits, certainly to more than her usual good looks, drove out with Jean in the afternoon. Their long *tournée* ended, as always, on the Pincio, where was the usual crowd of carriages circling in their narrow bounds, the same beauties, the same languid dandies, the same tourists, the same band, and very much the same sunset, with the great purple dome hanging between them and the western sky. They drew up at the edge of the terrace, bowing this way and that, to

friends on foot or in the carriages near. Sylvia, half turned away, did not see Major Limber leaning against a stone post, from which he detached himself as he saw them stop; he moved toward them slowly, waiting only for Sylvia's glance of recognition. Jean's eyes met his; for an instant she looked him steadily in the face, and raising her hand to the footman who stood at attention by the front wheel, her lips formed the words "drive on." The man sprang to his place; the carriage started with a scurry of hoofs and a clatter of pole-chains, and Major Limber was left *planté la*, his hand half raised to his hat. It was an affront, cool, deliberate and pointed, and Jean felt with a little quickening of her pulses, as they rolled away, Sylvia all unconscious beside her, that she had taken the initiative in hostilities.

Major Limber carried it off rather gallantly, lifting his hat to the receding carriage and walking across the road as if with his first intention, and disappearing under the ilex trees to conceal the rage and fury in his face. Many other rebuffs, in the course of a tolerably im-

pudent life had fallen off Major Limber's hide like water from the proverbial duck's back, but this one was too public, unprovoked, unbearable. Jean's heart beat faster for a few minutes as they drove round and round. She had acted upon an impulse, as she so often did, and she now felt that she had perhaps been impolitic. The man had hitherto been only passively disagreeable and repugnant to her, now he must become an active enemy, or the look in his eyes as they met hers greatly belied him. But months of security in her false position had given her a feeling of confidence in it and herself. She had forgotten her prudent resolutions of never making an enemy when it was possible to make a friend, and in her fancied immunity she had gratified a spite which some time ago she would have severely suppressed. A slight feeling of uneasiness came over her, which grew and strengthened until she almost lost control of herself. She had meant to dine out, but her nerves took such possession of her that she sent a regret, and sat alone, brooding, regretting, unhappy, with the great dog pushing his head into her

hand and looking into her face with wistful eyes.

There was a knock, and Colonel Yorke's card was brought to her. He had never called on her before, and she roused herself to receive him with cordiality and what spirit she might.

"Fortune befriends me, Mrs. Grandison," said Colonel Yorke. "I feel myself under the protection of the fickle goddess in being so lucky as to find you at home."

"She extends her favors to me," said Jean, graciously. "I had meant to dine out, but sent a regret, and I believe," she added, with a frank laugh, "I was regretting *that* until your card came."

This was a promising beginning. Jean forgot her intention of having a fit of despair; Colonel Yorke's presence was like some potent cordial to her, inspiriting her until she appeared in her very best aspect, as a charming, conversable, clever woman of the world.

Colonel Yorke, who had hitherto admired her from a semi-artistic point of view, delighting in her stately grace of movement, outcome of her perfect physical development, in her

noble contours, and her oddly attractive coloring, the glow of her dark cheek, the brilliancy of her deep-set eyes, the sheen of her fair hair, now suddenly awoke to a perception of the fact that all this was not the sum of her charms. As for Jean, her reflections on the vanity of human wishes now seemed to her the merest dyspeptic fatuity. Life had become worth living; her destiny a glorious one; all the mistakes of her life were forgotten, and all in the short space of a two hours' call.

Colonel Yorke broke a short silence which had followed the relinquishing of some topic, speaking in a lower tone, his eyes fixed on the fire. "I knew your husband, Mrs. Grandison."

Jean's heart gave one great thump, and the room danced and wavered before her eyes.

"I have never spoken of him before," went on Colonel Yorke, "because there are so many Grandisons, I was never quite sure, even with the name before me, until I saw his photograph in Miss Wyndham's hand one day."

Jean remembered, and bitterly regretted that she had allowed Sylvia to make a sketch of poor Eustace Grandison's handsome head.

"We were old friends—boyhood's friends," went on Colonel Yorke, without observing her silence, "but I had lost sight of him for some years previous to his death. We were both wanderers, and going each our different ways, our correspondence dropped. Men seldom hold fast to each other by that link which women forge so well. I never knew his family—"

Jean drew a long breath of relief.

"And so it happened that I never knew of his marriage until I met you—nor have I ever known any particulars of his death. He was a noble fellow."

Jean's throat contracted with a sharp spasm; speech was for a moment impossible to her, but her face was half-hidden by her great fan of peacock plumes, and she presently controlled her voice by a mighty effort.

"I do not know Mr. Grandison's family either," she said, rather huskily, then paused from sheer inability to go on.

"Ah! they were an odd lot, I remember," said Colonel Yorke, easily. "Poor Eustace could never hit it off with any of them except his sister Rose."

"He died at Dover," went on Jean, more steadily, though in a very low voice.

"Of fever?" said Colonel Yorke. "Where did he pick it up?"

"I never knew," said Jean, desperately. "Colonel Yorke, you must forgive me if I can not tell you much. It is too painful—there was so much to try me—the distress was so great."

Her voice died away, silenced by the sound of her speech. For the first time she had had to put the lie she was living into words. All that had gone before had been easy—circumstances had played into her hands at every turn until this one moment of unforeseen trial.

And up to this moment, she had imagined for herself some way of escape, some place for repentance, but now it seemed as if the walls closed round her, as in the old weird story; by what she had so definitely spoken, she must abide, there was no loop-hole left.

Colonel Yorke saw that she was deeply moved, and he rose to leave her; Jean controlled herself, and stretching out her hand, said with a sort of splendid audacity:

"I can not speak to you to-night; but indeed, Colonel Yorke, I am glad to meet an old friend of Eustace, and I should be proud if I might retain your friendship for his sake."

"It is yours, dear Mrs. Grandison," said Colonel Yorke, "truly and unreservedly yours, for your own sake as well as his."

And Jean, in the midst of all her trouble, felt a strange, tender warmth at her heart.

When he was gone, her composure deserted her. Some such crisis she had expected; some encounter with one who had known Eustace Grandison in the flesh, had hovered as a vague possibility on the horizon of her fancy; some questioning she had been prepared for; yet when it came it had seemed as sudden, as unwelcome, as death.

"And yet," she reflected, looking back upon the conversation. "No amount of preparation could have gotten me out of it any better."

A faint sort of a misgiving, which had, however, nothing of the nature of remorse, crossed her mind, suggesting that as a matter of policy, it would have been better to have invented a name, rather than to have entangled herself

with the posthumous history of a real person. But beyond this, no regrets, no stirrings of conscience disturbed her; she only felt a thrill of excitement over this first test of her powers of dissimulation; a sort of elation over the readiness with which she had escaped from a puzzling dilemma, and, as she grew cooler, an uneasy prompting to escape from the neighborhood of one so directly interested in her as Colonel Yorke. One of her moods of uncontrollable nervousness came upon her; she felt as if she must fly from his presence, must have time to school and strengthen herself; above all, that she must be gone from countries where she was liable at every turn to meet Eustace Grandison's friends.

She would sail for America in May; she would leave Rome at once; she was too anxious, too agitated; she felt she should betray herself if she met Colonel Yorke again. And she felt blindly irritated against the one who had surprised her, weak, unready, vulnerable, as if the fault lay with him for having known the stranger whose name she had chosen to wear.

In short, Jean yielded as usual to a causeless panic, and after a sleepless night she rose, haggard and unnerved, to make hasty preparations for departure. Girth and Pritchett received their orders while she ate her late breakfast. Mrs. Wyndham and Sylvia, as her nearest and dearest, were told regretfully and affectionately, that she was forced to leave at once on important business. Promises, regrets, hopes to meet again, were renewed and exchanged; and before they had recovered from their astonishment, on the next day but one, Jean had left Rome.

CHAPTER XIX.

"To whom a conscience never wakes."

SYLVIA'S dismay was great; she had counted on another month of Jean's society in her beloved Rome; and Sylvia was now not alone in her interest and regret.

This abrupt departure had not been effected without comment, as had been the case when Jane Harding had left her native land, or when the reserved and unknown widow had so suddenly quitted Paris. The handsome, popular Mrs. Grandison was too much of a personage in Roman society. Every one knew her; many envied her; most people liked and admired her; and, having attained very nearly the position she coveted in the world's eye, it was the natural consequence that those who composed that world should talk about her. And, accordingly, from all the *salons* of the foreign colony there went up such a clatter of

tongues, such a tattling and gossiping as would have furnished Pope with a new chapter on the characters of women—and of men. Some staunch friends Jean had, in the Wyndhams, Forbes and Kooystra, and the good-natured interest expressed by the Duchess of Saintsbury, now returned from Southern Italy, stood her in good stead. But people must comment on the suddenness of her departure; there were stories of unpaid debts, and at last a whisper began to be heard: Mrs. Grandison was not what she seemed; was not rich; was not Mrs. Grandison—in short, was neither more nor less than an adventuress and an impostor.

Some such rumor as this reached Sylvia's ears one day at a reception to which she had unwillingly gone; for with Jean, and Colonel Yorke, who had gone to Constantinople a few days after Jean's departure—she seemed to have lost heart and spirit. She was pale, languid and depressed, and was contributing little to the gayety of the group of ladies among whom she sat; intellectual topics failed gradually to interest them, and they finally turned to the unfailing resource of gossip.

"So the distinguished Mrs. Grandison turns out to be a clever adventuress, Mrs. Atherton," said one lady, caressing the knot of her bonnet-strings with a well-gloved hand.

"Not merely clever, but so successful, my dear," returned Mrs. Atherton. "Think how she has duped us all, with her carriages and her diamonds—paste, I dare say."

"But the horses were real, I am sure," put in a demure little bride, with a malicious twinkle in her eyes.

"Much more substantial than *Mrs. Grandison's* pretensions," said Mrs. Atherton, loftily ignoring her many drives behind those "real horses."

"What!" cried Sylvia, suddenly roused. "Who dares to hint such things about Mrs. Grandison? I beg your pardon, Mrs. Atherton, but I am so astonished. I have heard nothing of all this. I beg you to give it full and emphatic contradiction. Mrs. Grandison an impostor! People must be mad!"

"My dear," said Mrs. Atherton, somewhat stiffly. "You are very young, and it is very pretty of you to take up the cause of a per-

son you have been so much with—but we know."

"And so do I know," cried Sylvia, indignantly. "And much better, I am sure, than you can, for I have staid with her for months in her English home. She is my mother's friend as well as my own, and I can not hear such things said of her. What can people be thinking of! Major Limber," she cried, appealing to that gentleman as he passed. "Pray re-enforce me; you, I am sure, will not allow such things to be said. You knew Mrs. Grandison in England, I have heard you say."

"I knew the lady—yes," said Major Limber suavely, but with an ugly look in his eyes. "I met her in a *pension* in London, where she came without much pomp and circumstance."

"But you have been to Manycotes," persisted Sylvia.

"Pardon me, Miss Wyndham, if I can not indorse the lady as heartily as you wish. I really know *nothing* about her beyond such representations as she herself has made."

The ladies exchanged significant smiles, and poor Sylvia found herself breathless, trembling,

and utterly unable to answer Mrs. Atherton's bland, "Dear child, you must be careful how you take up the cause of a person who may not be all she should be."

She turned hastily away to conceal the indignant tears which blinded her, Major Limber moving aside to let her pass; he felt he had risked somewhat, in speaking of Mrs. Grandison as he had done, but he had been accustomed to a world in which friends could listen with equanimity to any thing which did not affect themselves, listening unmoved to slurs and sneers, and turning to meet the traduced one with smiling protestations of changeless affection. He fancied he would have some apologies to make, that it might take him some time to re-establish himself in the high place he felt so confident of holding, in her good graces; but he was wholly unprepared for the passionate vehemence with which she took up Mrs. Grandison's cause. He kept his place at her side as she pushed her way through the crowded room, addressing some slight observations to her in his customary tone of confidential flattery.

"Major Limber!" she cried, turning upon him a glance of bitter contempt, too blindly furious to consider the unwisdom of her words. "Never speak to me again! Treacherous! Unmanly! You are all Mrs. Grandison said—and more!"

"Ah! madam!" muttered Limber to himself, as the folds of the portiere closed after Sylvia's retreating figure. "So I owe you this too! I have lost Sylvia—and by God, you shall pay me for it!"

Sylvia, trembling and unnerved, hurried away from the door, brushing past the man-servant who offered to call a cab, and forgetting that she was on foot and alone, crossed the Piazza di Spagna and began to climb the steps toward the Trinitá de' Monti, her eyes still full of tears. In her excitement she did not see Forbes and Kooystra, who were descending them, until Kooystra, seeing a look of despair on Ian's face, and not being dazed by Sylvia's presence into utter inability to act,—good-naturedly stopped her by a word.

"Do you come from Lady Fenimore's, Miss

Wyndham?" he asked. "We were hoping to meet you there."

Sylvia stopped, too agitated for any ceremonious greeting.

"Oh! do not go there!" she cried, "I shall never go there again. They are saying such things about dear Mrs. Grandison."

Kooystra cast a curious, quick look at Forbes.

"It is all that horrid Major Limber," went on Sylvia. "I know he has started these stories about her being—her not being—her going away in debt. They dared to call her an adventuress," burst out poor Sylvia, clinching her hands with a "kill Claudio" expression. "I know he has done it all. Oh! if I were only a man!"

"By heavens, I should like to fight him!" cried Forbes.

"Duels are not *de notre siècle*," said the cooler Kooystra, "but I should thoroughly enjoy horse-whipping him, and I dare say I shall some day. But, in the meantime, let us consider what is best to be done. It is *not* best to stay away from Lady Fenimore's on

account of this gossip. Where Mrs. Grandison's enemies are, there her friends should be, too. Forbes, walk home with Miss Wyndham and then follow me to Lady Fenimore's. I shall be there an hour at least."

As luck would have it, Kooystra, making his way toward his hostess through a crowded *salon*, was forced into close quarters with Major Limber just in time to hear that worthy repeat his slander to a fresh listener. "Have you heard the news about the soi-disant Mrs. Grandison?" et cætera.

"I shall demand proof of that news, Major Limber," broke in Kooystra, turning to face him, "if your rancor outweighs your prudence, and you persist in belying Mrs. Grandison. But not here," he added, the direct gaze of his piercing blue eyes seeming to check Major Limber on the verge of an impetuous outburst. "Whatever explanations or apologies you may wish to offer, I shall be ready to receive—elsewhere."

There was a little frightened stir among the ladies; this sounded very war-like, and Lady Fenimore came sailing toward them with out-

stretched hands and wide, flying draperies. Major Limber had but a second for reflection. He had no proofs; he was not a coward, but he did not care to engage in an altercation with any friend of Sylvia's. Rome was pleasant to him, and he did not care to leave it in such an explosive way; and, above all, here was a chance to put some one else in the wrong. So he summoned some sort of a smile, and said, with an air of frank *bonhomie:*

"My dear Kooystra, I *have* no proofs, and as for explanations, I make mine now frankly. I was merely repeating an odd bit of gossip, picked up at a *cafe*, without the least malevolence, and I withdraw it with pleasure, since you say it is not so."

He looked to see Kooystra disconcerted, but the cold blue eyes were still fixed upon him with that strange power, his own sank under them, and somehow it was he who felt embarrassed.

"Take care that you repeat no more such gossip!" said Kooystra, sternly, and turned upon his heel to address Lady Fenimore.

"Oh! M. Kooystra," said that great lady,

reproachfully, "I thought I could trust *you*."

"So all my friends think, Lady Fenimore," he answered, quietly, "especially Mrs. Grandison. And it is by way of deserving that trust that I do not propose to permit Major Limber's tongue such latitude as he gives it, at least in speaking of *my* friends. You must pardon my giving him his lesson here. I should not stop to consider my whereabouts if I heard him maligning *you*."

Lady Fenimore could not object to this. Besides, Major Limber was going, actually slinking away as if he felt himself beaten, and Kooystra was at her side, among her guests, exerting the peculiar charm of manner and voice which made this strange, ugly little man sometimes irresistible. Lady Fenimore forgave him, and before he left found, to her great surprise, that she had given him a promise not to receive Limber again.

Meanwhile, Sylvia and Forbes, the former still shedding indignant tears, had turned to the left at the top of the Spanish steps, and

followed the Trinitá dei' Monti to a gate of the Pincian Gardens, close by the Academy of France. It is a retired corner of the gardens, and here Sylvia sank down on the nearest bench and wept unrestrainedly. Ian Forbes experienced a curious conflict of feeling. He struggled against his man's horror of tears —which strongly prompted him to run away— because this weeping girl was the woman he loved, and he shared in great measure the indignation which swayed her. So he stood before her, agitated, undecided, his heart melting within him with affection and tenderness, while a confusion of contradictory sentiments checked their expression. At one moment he almost laughed aloud as the random, irritated thought crossed his mind—"I'm sure Mrs. Grandison never cries," and in the revulsion from this harsh judgment he sat down beside Sylvia and gently took her hand.

"I can not bear it!" sobbed Sylvia. "Perfidious, treacherous women! How I despise them! And *you*—you were her friend, too, or appeared to be. Why don't you say something?"

This was undeserved, but Ian did not resent it. He had lost his head a little, and softer sentiments were uppermost.

"Dear Miss Wyndham!" he said, "I am as truly her friend as I am yours, and you *know* I will do any thing you tell me—for I love you!"

Sylvia started to her feet. In the tumult of her feelings she had hardly realized the full significance of Ian's unluckily timed avowal, but the sound of the words awakened her to a realization of fact that a *tête-à-tête* in a retired part of the Pincio was by no means "the thing."

She began to walk hurriedly homeward, uttering as she went incoherent phrases which plainly told she could not detach her thoughts long enough from Jean's affairs to appreciate what Forbes had said.

Poor Ian listened very patiently to the words which showed him how small a place he held in her thoughts, and only when he parted from her at the outer door of the court-yard, said timidly:

"Some day will you tell me if there is no hope for me at all?"

Sylvia came out of her maze with a start of dismay.

"Mr. Forbes," she cried. "Oh! forgive me!"

But Ian's endurance was at an end; he had turned hastily away and was walking headlong toward the Porta del Popolo.

Mrs. Wyndham had driven out, Jean was gone, and Sylvia, entering the empty *salon*, was fain to fling herself down before a little, merry, light-hearted fire, bustling up the chimney in a great hurry, and to think herself out of her bewildered distress as best she might by herself. She was in that state of nervous tension which made her mother's probable return from her drive, years off; helpless anger against Jean's detractors spurred her on to any impulsive act, while a great rush of softening compunction came over her as she remembered the careless and off-hand way in which she had received poor Ian's declaration. She felt she must do something, not much matter what; so she straightway did as foolish a thing as could enter into the mind of woman to conceive. She had just self-possessior. enough not to

write Jean a full and particular account of the scene at Lady Fenimore's, but she felt she owed some apology to Ian, so she hastily wrote, sealed, and sent the following note:

"My Dear Mr. Forbes,

"Pray, pray forgive me for what I said—or rather for what I did not say to you this morning. My mind was so full of dear Mrs. Grandison that I forgot the commonest courtesy; but you must know I could not bear to wound you. I can't tell you how deeply I feel your kindness—indeed I am incapable of telling any one any thing to-night, and must beg you not to come and see me for a few days. By and by, when I am capable of connected thought, I will write you more coherently. Just now I can only apologize for behaving so rudely, so badly. I was so wrought up I did not know what I was about, but you will not misunderstand me, I know. Pray come and see me soon. You are my only consolation in this dreadful affair, for I know you feel with me in every way.

"Yours sincerely,

"Sylvia Wyndham.

"Rome, Friday."

Having thus perpetrated one of those incon-

ceivably foolish actions of which the wisest women are sometimes guilty, Sylvia went to bed relieved of all anxieties unconnected with Jean, and wholly unconscious of having given Ian Forbes the least reason to count upon her accepting him. As for Forbes, he leaves it to the unbiased reader whether the above letter is not good warrant for him to consider himself tacitly accepted, a mere maidenly coyness postponing more definite acknowledgments to some future day.

CHAPTER XX.

"The very substance of the ambitious
Is but the shadow of a dream."

JEAN, following her will-o'-the-wisp, social success, westward, recovered very quickly from the foolish panic which had caused her to leave Rome. Her spirit calmed by the pleasures of Parisian shopping, and the providing of a dream-like collection of gowns and *confections*, she wondered at her fears, recognizing and regretting the weakness of her nature, which allowed her to be swayed by such unreasoning moods. After all, however, these abrupt entrances and exits suited her dramatic vein; they served to make her noteworthy—she was far from imagining in what way—and she took a sort of pride in them. She wrote lovingly to Sylvia, cordially to Kooystra, Forbes and one or two more, and by the middle of May, at which time her passage was taken for America, she had recovered the belief in her-

self and the pleasure in her rôle which her Roman winter had fostered.

Jean Grandison, self-approving, self-assured, was a very different traveling companion from Jane Harding, shrinking, imbittered and sensitive. She was soon on good terms with the most desirable of her shipmates, and not at all inclined to be reserved, as regarded her purposes and prospects.

When Mrs. Prescott found that this charming widow meant to buy or build a house at Newport "for a *pied-à-terre* in my native land after so many years of exile," she thawed a little from her Bostonian triple armor of reserve, and—mentally resolving to find out who Jean "was" before she became Mrs. Grandison—revealed the fact of her own summer residence there, and by the time they landed, had so far forgotten what was due to herself, as to express a hope of seeing Mrs. Grandison (spinster identity still unknown) at Sea-Spray. Other fellow-travelers less distinguished for blue blood or Newport cottages were equally cordial, and Jean felt that she reached her native land with a fairly promising number of

eminently desirable acquaintances. Thus when, early in June, she appeared, with her usual unostentatious simplicity at a quiet but "swell" boarding-house in Newport, she no longer felt herself a stranger in a strange land, but a properly accredited visitor, with no small claim upon her entertainers. Her expectations were fulfilled; the Duchess of Saintsbury's kindly note having been dispatched to Mrs. Du-Moncel-Brown, that indisputably great woman, arbiter of the said and done at Newport, hastened to welcome her. And when Jean, modestly calling upon her in a cab, had made her little speech about a *pied-à-terre*, Mrs. Du-Moncel-Brown took her up enthusiastically, driving her from agent to agent in her own landau until Jean's search for a cottage should be concluded to the satisfaction of her fastidious fancy.

Nor was this pure philanthropy; the reward of being able to talk of Jean as "a charming woman with such cordial letters to me from the dear duchess," was full and immediate. Not Jean alone was gilded by the reflected glory of an introduction from the Duchess of

Saintsbury. The golden haze also hung shimmering about Mrs. Du-Moncel-Brown as the addressee of the letter.

Curious and worthy of study are the various attitudes of the American mind in regard to titles. Young ladies of the most pronounced democratic principles are heard inveighing against the toadyism with which the steps of a certain marquis or baron have been attended; how the "marquis' eyes, the baron's smile" have been loudly sung by less discreet fair ones, and until a circumstantial recital of how *they declined* the great man's acquaintance, the cynical hearer suspects that marquis and baron must somehow have failed to recognize their especial charm. The cynical hearer is apt to be confirmed in this suspicion, when, on the appearance of an unassuming gentleman, who, really believing in the republicanism professed by us as a people, has laid aside his title in favor of a simple "Mr.," the pretty scornful lips are heard occupying themselves with a recital of his place and privileges, while the delicious monosyllable "prince" comes trippingly from their tongues. Then there are

the men who parade their indifference and contempt for rank to the very men they are courting, and while they affect to be unable to remember "that d—d nonsense of Lord this and Duke that," retain for years a vivid recollection of their intimacy with "that good fellow So-and-so; he's a duke, you know; but I didn't mind that."

Not to be too monotonous, our Republic fosters another class, less numerous and more exclusive, descendants of the "real old families;" north, south, east, and can we say west? in whom family pride has been cherished, like some rare exotic, for nearly two hundred years. These do not hesitate to say they love a lord; they feel themselves of the same fine porcelain clay of humanity.

"Our institutions are all very well," they say, "but *you* and *I* know, my dear Mrs. Blueblood, that there can be no *real* equality between *us* and common persons of *no* family."

But even here grows and flourishes the "*fine fleur*" of humanity, the gentleman in the true, not in the petrified, sense of the word; here develop to uttermost perfection, men and

women who, long-descended or self-made, are of the best blood of all the ages, and to them may safely be left the credit and the future of our land.

When all these things reached the ears of Mrs. Prescott, Jean's Boston friend of the Servia, it seemed clearly her duty not to wait upon Jean's modesty, but promptly to call upon her at her boarding place. Here, too, Jean was presently re-enforced by the arrival of Mrs. Randolph and her daughter, whilome guests at Manycotes, and unconscious cause of Major Limber's first discomfiture. Casually meeting them, she was cordially embraced and claimed as an old friend. To this even her caution acceded, foreseeing the value of an ally who could speak with knowledge of her English home, to which she had as yet barely alluded. Sadie Randolph was not quite "in the swim," as she phrased it, but she was pretty, and presentable; she knew a good many "nice" people, and when Mrs. Du-Moncel-Brown and Mrs. Prescott found that she could talk enthusiastically of her visit to Jean's "place" in Somersetshire, they accepted her at her face-

value. Jean's usual good luck in the matter of real estate did not fail her here. A fifty thousand dollar "cottage," fallen vacant by the death of the owner, seemed so cozy, modest and suitable, so much "the thing" in every way, that it was quickly bought; its deficiencies, imperceptible to any eye but Jean's, hastily supplied; the name of "Many-cotes-in-America," placed upon the gate, and Jean found herself once more a house-holder. Before very long too, she found her ideas of household arrangement becoming the ideals of her enthusiastic new friends. Sadie Randolph, invited to remain at the new Manycotes while her mother took a further flight, was too quick in her perceptions not to fulfill Jean's unexpressed expectations. Every dainty device of Jean's luxury-loving brain, every reminiscence of the "old country" Manycotes, was industriously *exploitée* by that right-minded young lady, and always at precisely the proper time. On a damp, foggy day, a wood-fire having been lit to enliven the belated luncheon which Mrs. Du-Moncel-Brown was sharing with them—it would be:

"Oh, *dear* Mrs. Grandison—that lovely fire, with a footman and that fascinating brass kettle, just like *lovely* Manycotes! How I hope it will storm to-morrow, then we can have a fire at breakfast. But where, oh! where, is the delicious little silver gridiron we used to toast our bacon on at Manycotes?"

And so on, *ad libitum;* from all which it may be perceived that Miss Sadie Randolph, though not intellectually Jean's equal, nor the congenial companion Sylvia had been, was a shrewd young woman who knew how to make herself valued where she would be, and had a single eye to her own interests, as seen through the medium of a friend's glory.

CHAPTER XXI.

"The supreme happiness of life is the conviction that we are loved, loved for ourselves; say rather, loved in spite of ourselves."

THUS Jean's social success in her own country was assured at once, without encountering any of the impediments which had daunted her at the outset of her career. The stars in their courses had fought for her, and she began to have that comfortable sense of deserving all the good which could befall her, which is the portion of those who demand most from life. Jean's creed did not stop at the belief that the world owed her a living; she also firmly held that it owed her admiration, flattery, imitation; and now that these demands were in some degree responded to, she began to wear that smiling face which is so readily reflected. Jean had bitterly condemned her mother for causing her to spend the best years of her life in a friendless exile. In

the springtime of life, when friendships germinate as well as plants, she had been shut away from her kind like any cloistered nun. Now, at thirty-five, this was changed; friendly faces greeted her at every turn; she was courted, flattered, and caressed in the very land with which were associated the memories of her sensitive girlhood, the bitterness of utter isolation, the shipwrecked feeling of passing through crowds without seeing a single familiar face.

Now, when Loki was led along the avenue, mincing coquettishly on her dainty, shell-like hoofs, every voice said, "There goes Mrs. Grandison's mare;" and every head was turned to look at Jean as she followed, in her hat and habit, leaning back in the low victoria, with its incomparable team: for among the foreign customs which Jean affected was that of mounting her horse outside of the town.

But her nature had been too long given over to the seven devils of self-torment to exist without a grievance. In the full tide of her quickly-won success, Jean began to consider with herself that these visitors, these guests

and hosts, and assiduous flatterers and imitators, were mere acquaintances, interested and self-seeking, as she cynically acknowledged herself to be. She craved the security of real friendship and honest affection. She thought almost with tears, of Sylvia's sweet sincerity, of Kooystra's oddly expressed, uncertain, yet unmistakable attachment.

At just this time, when her heart was stretching out yearning hands toward the few people who had crept into it, almost against her will, Colonel Yorke arrived in Newport.

Keppel Yorke, having sailed from a Mediterranean port directly for America, found the atmosphere of the country he had made his own with such enthusiasm, curiously uncongenial. He was one of the men whom good-fortune permits to be busy or idle at will, and his first impulse had been to remedy his creeping discontent by the common-sense prescription of hard work. He had thrown himself with avidity into the details of his affairs, rushing from Texan pasture lands to Colorado mines and California wheat-fields. But he was ill at ease; his thoughts, usually like well-drilled

soldiers, very much at his command, kept turning aside into pleasant but unprofitable ways. The odor of wood smoke, a cool breeze as he passed from sunshine into shadow, sent them on an airy voyage to Rome, and the little *salon* where he had spent so many hours with Jean and Sylvia. Was it Sylvia's girlish charm or Jean's matured beauty which exercised over him a spell so powerful? He was loth to acknowledge himself under any woman's influence. In reviewing the by no means virgin pages of his past, he encountered many episodes, when he had fancied himself, or perhaps had been, desperately in love. It had been, however, a brief madness, readily recovered from, and in no way akin to the impulse with which his whole nature now turned to—Jean. Yes, it was Jean. In her serene and rather inexpressive presence he felt that responsive quality which we are fain to designate by clumsy circumlocutions, but which the Italians characterize by saying, "she is *simpatica*." Comprehension, companionship, response, restfulness, fulfillment, all these seemed to come to him with Jean's gracious presence, the

sound of her voice—the touch of her hand. This, at least, is what Colonel Yorke said to himself, when, having read Jean's name in the Newport notes of some newspaper, having followed unquestioned the impulse which sent him on a journey of some thousands of miles toward her abode—he at last found himself face to face with her in the drawing-room of the new Manycotes.

As for Jean, all the training of years of outward self-repression, the long habit of mastering emotion under an exterior of cold indifference, were scarcely sufficient to conceal the sudden, mad joy which told Jean her unsuspected secret. Love, late, but more intense for the delay, had come to her at last.

Mammas who had looked with an approving eye upon Colonel Yorke's qualifications for the post of son-in-law; daughters who had gracefully acquiesced in their mother's wish to install him in that position, were obliged to relinquish, not without sighs, their hopes, when they saw with what fixed purpose and disdain of all subterfuge Colonel Yorke devoted himself, as the phrase goes, to Mrs.

Grandison. He had lived too long, lightly to spare "the time that is lost in wooing" by younger men, and soon gave up the pretext of seeking Jean for any thing but Jean herself, if haply he might win her.

It was Jean's first wooing, and it was long before she realized his meaning. For the first time in her life, she felt herself unworthy—a newborn humility revealed her to herself at her true value. And the joy which transfigured all her being was unmarred by any touch of the coquette's pride of power gained through man's senses over his soul.

They had been talking idly, with long, delicious silences, such as lovers, acknowledged or unacknowledged, delight in.

"Coward!" said Colonel Yorke, starting to his feet and bending over her. "That I should have hesitated, so long. I have feared my fate too much. Jean, I must risk all now, loss or gain, because I *must* know if you love me—as I do you."

And Jean, never having discovered the use or value of a "woman's no," met truth with truth, and answered simply: "Indeed I do."

CHAPTER XXII.

"Dare to be true; nothing is worth a lie."

SOME far-off gipsy ancestress Jean must have had, whose wild blood stirring in her veins, drove her out of doors in all her hours of excitement, whether of joy or pain. It was late before she was alone, and could yield to this craving, but when she was at last free, she wrapped herself in a shadowy cloak, and calling Bor, stepped out of the low window on the dusky lawn.

A great golden moon,—the hunter's moon, for it was October,—hung low in the heavens, slowly rising over a long dim line of distant coast. On a far-off point

> "The light-house, like a sullen star,
> Twinkled to many a dozing tar,
> Rude cradled on the mast."

Between and far below, lay the sea, softly breathing, serene, unvexed, and treacherous.

"And this was in the world for me, and I

knew it not! Oh! that I had lived worthy of it!" thought Jean.

All her faults, follies and mistakes rose up accusingly before her, but for the time being the mad rush of her joy swept them out of sight; for this one night she was supremely, gloriously happy. She longed to saddle Loki, to creep out, not by her front gate, but here, along the cliff; to ride far and fast along the moonlit beaches; and had she been Jane Harding still, she would have done it.

But something now withheld her; she felt the pressure of a sweet bondage restraining her; her will was swayed by another's; her deeds, words, thoughts were owed to him, a debt gladly paid. So she lingered but a little while in the wonderful golden calm: Bor pacing grave and glad beside her, till the tumult of her heart was calmed enough for her to think of sleep—and of her looks on the morrow.

But the serpent for Jean's paradise was not long in appearing, presenting himself the very next day, with a prettily forked red tongue, and, indeed, waking Jean from happy

slumbers with a small venomous hiss. For to Jean, waking early to brood upon her joy, came the sudden recollection of her false name, her false position, her false self; the vast sum of falsehood she was about to bestow on the man she loved, in return for his honest devotion.

Now, indeed, she must escape and be alone. She sprang from her bed and rang furiously; it was very early, but Jean's household were used to caprices, and Loki was saddled and stood at the door, the graceful head on the long, pliant neck turning eagerly, as she neighed a welcome to her mistress—almost as soon as Jean could get into her habit.

In the company of this dumb, loving friend, and in the sweet morning air, all Jean's thoughts were calmed; she rode slowly on beside the receding surf, thinking earnestly and intently over her position. The sentimental side of it, she was able to dismiss more quickly than she had feared. The truth and faith of her heart were Yorke's, she reflected, and she felt no prompting to endanger her place in his regard by the confession of her

double-dealing. As for the practical side of it, she considered attentively its every possible aspect. Her money was now all safely invested; the deed of each piece of property bore the name of Jean St. George Grandison; no investigation which he was likely to make into her affairs would give any hint of the truth. No human being existed likely to betray or even suspect her. Since her return to America she had encountered no one of the few formal acquaintances of former days, nor had she even heard whether Mr. Sandman were dead or alive. Had she done so, however, what reason had any one of them to doubt her statement that in the years which had elapsed since she last left America she had been married and widowed, as she was now about to be married again. This last thought swept away all lingering doubts; into abstract questions of truth and falsehood it was not Jean's nature to enter, and dismissing now every misgiving, she turned Loki's head homeward with a glad heart.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"There is some soul of greatness in things evil."

SYLVIA was coming. This was the rose-leaf on Jean's overflowing cup, for now that she loved, her heart was wider and warmer for all those whom she called her friends. She repeated the news often to Colonel Yorke, who smiled over her childlike pleasure, while sharing it in his way; and when at last Sylvia came, Jean's heart felt what was, perhaps, its first generous pang, at seeing the young girl so wan, silent and *distraite*.

"My little one!" she said tenderly, "you are so pale, you have been working too hard."

"I have been trying your prescription," said Sylvia, with a smile as sad as tears. "I have faithfully tried to forget myself in my work. I am improving—you shall see. You must let me paint you, for I never saw you so beautiful."

Jean's cheeks flushed with a conscious color.

"You shall, dearie—but you shall not work too hard over it. This glorious pure air will do you good, and Colonel Yorke and I——"

"Is Colonel Yorke here?" interrupted Sylvia, not noticing the significant association of the names; and Jean was about to announce to her the joyful secret which shone in her every glance, but something in the girl's tone gave her pause. She moved away, turning to conceal her face, and said in an indifferent voice:

"Yes, he is still here, but I believe he is going soon."

There was a moment of eloquent silence; suspicion, dismay, certainty, swept through Jean's mind; she mastered herself presently and spoke caressingly, standing behind Sylvia's chair, and drawing the fair head fondly against her bosom.

"You have never told me his name, Sylvia," she said. "May I guess?"

"Why should I not tell you?" said Sylvia, in a broken voice. "It can be no shame to love —to have loved—such a man as Colonel Yorke."

Her voice died away in a whisper and Jean's heart gave two or three such throbs she felt as if Sylvia must have heard them.

"God bless you, my child," she said, after a second's pause. "Lie down now, and rest."

She kissed Sylvia's cold cheek, and left her to woo very uncertain slumbers.

While Sylvia slept, Jean acted, with feverish impulsiveness. She wrote and dispatched a hasty line to Colonel Yorke, bidding him come to her at once, and waited, in silent conflict with herself—strong and weak by turns, doubting herself, hating herself—and living through, altogether, some of the bitterest moments of her life.

"Colonel Yorke," she said abruptly, as he entered, forcing herself to set the seal of action on her resolution. "I can not marry you."

"What!" cried Colonel Yorke, in a voice which shook her to her heart's core. He looked fixedly at her, and added more calmly: "What have I done?"

"You—" said Jean, very low. "You have done nothing to offend me. "You are only too good for me. And so," she went on with a mere

caricature of a smile—"So I have sent for you to tell you that I can not and will not marry you, because some one far more worthy of you than I can ever be——"

"My God! Jean, do you know what you are saying?" broke in Colonel Yorke violently.

"Yes," said Jean, her self-possession coming back to face the difficulty she now realized. "I have reflected and I beg you to hear me. Did I care less for you, as a friend—did I esteem you less highly, I should perhaps have let things go on as they are." She faltered a moment here, but not again. Some heathen notion of expiation, together with a lightning flash of fear, playing about the difficulties of her false position, had perhaps suggested—certainly urged her on, to this way of escape from telling Colonel Yorke the whole truth.

"I accepted you on impulse, as I often act. I appreciate, I esteem, I admire you; but I have learned that some one more worthy of you, young, beautiful, all you could wish, loves you too." (This last word escaped her unawares.) "And I feel you would be happier freed from me. You have not considered

enough, perhaps. I am not young, not pliant and yielding—my character is cast in a sharp mold. It would be better for you to choose some one more lovable, whom you could shape to your will—she loves you so."

Colonel Yorke listened in silence to this piece of feminine logic, generosity, consistency and foolishness, dismay gradually giving place to surprise, relief and somewhat sarcastic amusement.

"I understand," he said, when she stopped. "You have discovered that some pretty school girl—I don't ask who—does me the honor to fancy herself in love with me."

Jean started, realizing how nearly she had betrayed another woman's most sacred secret. "And you are anxious to sacrifice my real happiness to your very mistaken notion of what that happiness ought to be. Well, Jean," he rose and stood before her, "I forbid you to sacrifice *yourself* and me to such a Quixotic whimsey. I love you, Jean, I am as much one with you now as though we had been married twenty years. It is useless to try and hand me over to some other woman—

absolutely useless to try and convince me that she loves me better than you do."

He took her hand, bending over her and looking at her with a proud glance of conscious mastery. Jean hesitated, trembled, yielded, not with that old, resentful submission, fighting against all that crossed her will, but with a delicious sense of rest, losing her wish to resist, in a conviction that resistance was useless. And not until Colonel Yorke had gone did she realize that she had a *mauvais quart d'heure* before her, in which she must tell Sylvia the truth—Sylvia, whose sad little secret she had so nearly told.

"But I never will tell," she thought, "cost me what lies it may."

And then, with that resolution to face the worst at once, so strange in a nature so weak as Jean's, she sought Sylvia in her room.

The girl had risen and dressed for dinner. Like Tennyson's "Rose" in that exquisitely vague and perfectly satisfying description of woman's dress, she was "gowned in pure white which fitted to the shape."

She was pale but less broken than before,

and a subtle change had come over face and manner, which startled Jean with a fear that she suspected.

"Sylvia," she began, rushing at her task, as she had done with Colonel Yorke. "Dear Sylvia, I have professed to love you so much. I do love you so sincerely, I wonder what you will say to me? Treacherous—false to you—though indeed I did not mean it. If I had only known! How shall I ever tell you, Sylvia? I am engaged to Colonel Yorke."

She stopped, clasping convulsively the cold brass rail of the bed by which she stood. Sylvia may have started or grown imperceptibly pale, but she answered in a steady voice:

"Dear Mrs. Grandison, please do not distress yourself. It can make no difference to me, for I am engaged to Mr. Forbes."

"What!" cried Jean, unconsciously illustrating the poverty of our language in vocative phrases, and then, with one rapid, backward glance, breathed a hearty mental thanksgiving for her failure. "Thank heaven! I didn't tell him who I meant. I didn't tell her how I

tried to give him up to her. I *needn't* give him up now, it is all right."

While Sylvia, unconscious of this swift flight of thoughts through Jean's mind, was saying in her quiet, sweet voice, "Yes, dear friend, you were neither false nor treacherous. You have never been any thing but goodness itself to me. And no one knows better than I the worth of what you have won. I don't know how I happened to tell you of my unlucky fancy. But I do not regret it; you are too noble for petty jealousy, and I would rather you *should* know. And now," she added, after a pause, "will you not congratulate me? For, indeed, Mr. Forbes is the kindest, the truest——"

Twilight had fallen, and there was only the reflection from the steely plain of sea without, and the dying flicker of a fire within. Jean clasped Sylvia in her arms, her heart aching with a terrible stress of feeling, love, pity and relief intermingling; and after all, it was Sylvia who soothed her tears away, kissing and caressing her, and saying in her old gay voice: "Come, let us go to our dinner. I am very hungry. And is not Colonel Yorke come? I think I hear his voice in the hall."

CHAPTER XXIV.

"The misty verge of truth."

THE apartment which Jean had occupied at the Hotel Louis-le-Grand, in Paris, consisted of five good-sized rooms, and to these had been added, at Jean's request, a little bachelor apartment of "*deux pièces*" which adjoined it. The tiny *salon* of this second suite had so sunny and pleasant an outlook that she had chosen to make a morning room of it, establishing there all her little feminine properties, writing materials, dispatch-boxes and pet books, and making it the favorite haunt of her solitary hours. On Mrs. Grandison's departure, however, Madame Berthon had re-assigned it to its original use, and thus, in the winter of 1883, Major Limber, being once more on his southern way in quest of a Colchis whose latitude and longitude were forever uncertain, became the occupant of these very bachelor quarters.

Though Major Limber's mental cuticle was somewhat of the thickest, it could not be said that he had forgotten the little episode at Rome, or any of his previous rebuffs at Jean's hands. They rankled still, but his purpose of getting even with Jean was only in abeyance, while all his aspirations turned toward an especially bright and particular star of an heiress; a wandering star, whose somewhat erratic course from place to place he felt himself obliged to follow. It was oddly characteristic of the man that he felt no ill-will toward Kooystra for his active hostility. Rather admiring him, in fact, for his spirited defense of Jean, while her less overt slights had cut more deeply, and his feelings toward her retained their pristine bitterness and malevolence.

A very slight thing served to re-awaken this rancor. Writing a note one day at a small table in his window, he felt hastily and impatiently in its single drawer for the blotter; finally, pulling out a half-sheet of paper which lay crumpled with it at the back of the drawer. This scrap lay unnoticed until his

own letter was sealed, when, mechanically smoothing it out before laying it in his blotting-book, his eyes were caught by a name repeatedly written upon it, in varying combinations.

"Jane Harding, Jane Grandison, Jane Harding Grandison, Jane St. George Grandison," and at last the signature:

"Jean St. George Grandison," which he had happened more than once to see—written in that graceful, shapely English hand which reveals so little of the writer's personality. It was not the unexpected recognition however which caused his sudden start and violent ejaculation, but the conviction which came to him in a flash, that the idle story set afloat by him in the very wantonness of malice *might* be true.

Too evidently these hasty scrawls were experiments in a change of name: whether to a cognomen legally assumed in the ordinary way by marriage, or as he had hinted, assumed of malice prepense, and for purposes of deception—the scrap of paper could not tell him. But his wish was so eager to father

the thought that he had little difficulty in believing in the accuracy of his random shot, still less in resolving to follow up this clew to its utmost possibilities for Jean's discomfiture. But with all his unscrupulous tenacity of purpose Major Limber was in no hurry. He was satisfied to have the mills of the gods grind slowly, and forgetting the possibility of ever becoming grist to these mills himself, he looked upon them as convenient instruments providentially provided to reduce his enemies to powder, while he presided complacently at the hopper. What were his enemies' views as to the purposes of the gods, he did not stop to consider, sharing that fortunate habit of thought, whereby most people are enabled to believe in a just punishment for other people and a well-merited reward for one's self. Just now there was metal more attractive in that southern land toward which he was traveling, full of hopes of final achievement in the shape of an advantageous marriage with a fresh-caught and preternaturally silly American girl. So, contenting himself with a cursory search for more

traces of Jean he secured his one bit of evidence very carefully in an inner fold of his pocket-book and took his way southward with a pleasant consciousness of power in reserve. In the pleasant winter cities where he had meant to carry on a triumphant campaign, Major Limber was presently aware of a subtle breath of antagonism, an influence which baffled him at every turn. The Duchess of Saintsbury had begun it with one of her brief uncompromising remarks. Lady Fenimore had cut him publicly in full sight of the people to whom he had boasted of her intimacy, and at one sweep all the introductions to titled people which had been the sop to his heiress's Cerberus-mother, became impossible.

The duchess' words were too explicit to leave him in ignorance of their meaning. "No one," she said, "could safely receive a person who spread scandalous reports about his hosts." And recognizing the futility of such a fight against fate, Major Limber, with rage in his heart, gave up the game. At Nice, whither he bent his steps, in company with some congenial souls, his anger for awhile was forgotten in

the tide of somewhat unusual success at Monte Carlo and various *Cercles*, from which he carried away consolation enough, in the shape of certain notes and checks, to render the immediate future rather bright. Here too, he made carefully guarded inquiries among the few who were too easy-going or too ill-informed to cut him, only to find that none of Jean's acquaintances, however great the degree of intimacy they claimed, were able to tell him who she had been before they knew her as Mrs. Grandison. A vagueness hung over her previous history which encouraged his suspicions, and the news of her marriage to Colonel Yorke roused to bitterest activity his purposes of revenge.

At each fresh proof that his enemy was flourishing "like a green bay-tree," Major Limber, being unacquainted with the denunciatory merits of the Psalms, contented himself with strong language of a secular kind, and with putting his detective powers seriously to work for Jean's discomfiture.

CHAPTER XXV.

"No falsehood can endure."

RETURNING to London in the merry month of May, with his purse so well furnished as to absolve him, for the moment, from the disagreeable necessity of pleasing other people, Major Limber had the pleasure of finding that other merry person, Mrs. Merriam, established there in pretty lodgings, and great content. These two allies suited one another perfectly, and had long ago agreed that had one or the other been less impecunious, a marriage between them would have been the happiest thing for both. As much love as he was capable of feeling for any one Major Limber bestowed on the vivacious little widow, who charmed his senses, inflamed his ambition and encouraged all his tastes without any undue requirements on the score of strict morality.

As much affection as her shallow heart could

hold Mrs. Merrian had given to the handsome, unscrupulous *vau-rien*, whose Irish ardor and perfectly selfish fondness fully satisfied her unexacting nature. But beyond an offensive and defensive alliance of a superficial kind, neither one was sufficiently disinterested or sufficiently carried away by passion to go, and they had remained for several years with much satisfaction in their somewhat ambiguous position of "great allies, and firm friends."

One warm day in May, Major Limber and his well-met companion were making their way through the brilliant mob which thronged the rooms of Burlington House: she, happy in the contented consciousness of a becoming bonnet; he, taking an Irishman's genuine pleasure in escorting a pretty and well-dressed woman in a conspicuous manner through a not unobserving crowd.

"There is a portrait here I want to show you, done by a man I know," said Major Limber, unable to overcome, even in Kooystra's case, his propensity for claiming acquaintance with celebrities. "Nothing was so much talked of at the *Salon*, year before last,

Kooystra might have gotten a good price for it and taken any place he pleased. But he's odd, poor fellow, infatuated about the woman, and positively refuses either to sell the picture or to paint any thing else."

"How affecting!" said Mrs. Merriam, with her little artificial laugh. "Pray, does the original persist in being hard-hearted? Must he content himself with her counterfeit presentment?"

"The original has just married another man —a rich man, though she has plenty of money herself."

"Horrid thing!" said Mrs. Merriam. "Why didn't she leave him for some one who really *needed* him. But stop!" she went on, seizing his arm, "there's a face I know. Yes —exaggerated—but it must be! Why, Major Limber, there's a picture of that haughty piece who crossed with us in the Servia. Harding was her name. It may be a fancy picture, but she sat for it."

Major Limber looked up and unrestrained by her presence uttered an oath under his breath,

"By G—, it's the very woman. *That's* Kooystra's picture of Mrs. Grandison! Lyssa! I *must* talk to you! Let's get out of this."

Mrs. Merriam was too wise a woman to oppose a man in such mad earnest, and they were quickly in a hansom, flying along the Knightsbridge road toward Kensington Gore, where Mrs. Merriam had set up her somewhat heathenish household gods. Major Limber could not wait, but poured out a hasty history of the two past winters, setting down, it may be, a good deal in malice toward others, but certainly extenuating nothing in his own conduct, which he left to Mrs. Merriam's sympathetic comprehension. The scrap of paper, however, was too precious to be taken from its hiding-place until they were seated in her drawing-room, when he displayed it with more diffidence about its value than he had felt in first finding it.

"This proves they are the same woman," Lyssa said, thoughtfully. She had listened with burning cheeks and the fullest sympathy to the recital of his wrongs. "But it does not prove that she has no right to the name of

Grandison, though, like you, I strongly suspect her. Let me think. We crossed in April, 1880. When was she at this hotel? Surely, you looked at the register?"

"I did," answered Limber. "The first entry was in August, 1880. You see I have it all written down. But I failed to find the name Harding, though I searched back a couple of years. But it never occurred to me to associate her with the girl on the steamer, though I clearly remember her now. It is unmistakable; it *must* be the same woman."

"*It is*," said Lyssa, positively. "But between April and August, 1880, I am afraid she might have had plenty of time to be married and widowed. Did you happen to learn whether she went there a widow?"

"Yes; in the deepest crape."

"And, you know, sometimes those foreign registers have a column of antecedents; did you by chance see where she came from?"

Major Limber turned the piece of paper and pointed.

"Le 16 Août 1880, Mme. E. St. George Grandison, de Londres. Arrivée de Calais à qua-

tre heures et demie. Appartement F. au premier."

"That is right! my best pupil," said Lyssa, approvingly, stretching out to him

—"A hand
White, delicate, dimpled, warm, languid and bland."

"But Calais!" thoughtfully. "Then she came from Dover?"

"Ha! by Jove," cried Major Limber, dropping her hand and rising in great excitement. "That reminds me of something! I was at Dover, with Carnegie, July of that same year, and I now remember seeing Miss Harding,"—with a sneer—"or Mrs. Grandison, whichever she was, on the pier, in mourning," he added reflectively; "but she had on a hat and no long veil. Do widows wear hats?"

Mrs Merriam laughed.

"If it suits them, you simpleton; and if they are becoming. She was in mourning on the steamer, and she was Miss Harding. So that tells nothing. But *July*—are you sure? Of course, she *might* have been married after she landed in April and have lost her husband between that and August. Grandison is a good

name. If such a person ever existed he can scarcely have died and left no trace of himself."

"If the name should be in 'Landed Gentry,'" suggested Major Limber, "or his death in an old file of the *Times*—or I might make some inquiries round about her place in Somerset."

"You must give me time to think," said Lyssa with wide, shining eyes fixed on him, but which did not see him. "I have an idea, I think, by which we may turn this thing to our mutual advantage. For whatever else she is, this woman seems to be really rich. But first we must get to the bottom of the affair; you must learn if such a person ever existed as Eustace St. George Grandison, and when he died. Go," she added, starting up with sparkling eyes, "find out all you can, and come back quickly. Indeed, Octavius, if what we suspect turn out true, you and I can make a grand stroke."

"You know, whatever we can do *together* I will do with my whole soul," he said eagerly.

"Go—go!" she cried, pushing him from her. "This is no time for sentiment, but if we suc-

ceed, great shall be your reward. I always hated the woman," she added dryly.

On Major Limber's next coming he brought with him a copy of a notice in the *Times* of August 20th, 1879.

"At 21 Marine Parade, Dover—of fever, Eustace St. George Grandison, only son of Everard Temple St. George Grandison, of Danesfort, Yorkshire, and Temple-Grandison, County of Sussex, Esquire, in the 27th year of his age. R. I. P."

"Dover," said Mrs. Merriam, in a considering tone, "and you saw her there. It all hangs together so far. Danesfort and Temple-Grandison. Why, this says nothing about Manycotes, but you say you were there. Could it have been a hired house?"

"No, for she used to speak of it as her own at Miss Masters', where I first met her. It had been let, and the lease had just fallen in."

"That was in 1881, the year her pictures were first exhibited," said Lyssa. "Well, it might have come to Mr. Grandison from his mother. Did you learn who she was?"

"A Miss Ormond, of County Waterford."

"I think," said Mrs. Merriam, slowly; "that it will be quite worth your while to make a little trip to Manycotes."

Which Major Limber accordingly did, with little result, but much satisfaction to himself, his duties consisting in making love to a pretty housemaid, who, having been one of the disaffected, under Pritchett's displeasure, was very ready to chatter about her late mistress. Beyond the fact that Manycotes had been bought by Jean from a bankrupt stock-broker, and that previous to her coming no one in the country side had heard the name of Grandison, Major Limber went away as wise as he came.

Mrs. Merriam was disappointed and annoyed. Whatever revelations she had hoped for from current county-gossip, having failed her, she began to fear that Jean's marriage had been genuine, and she showed her vexation so plainly as to surprise Major Limber. He was scarcely prepared to have her resent his wrongs in so vehement fashion, and came, of course, to the conclusion most flattering to his vanity. But Mrs. Merriam was not alto-

gether so disinterested as it pleased him to fancy. She had convinced herself of certain advantages to accrue to her when she had gained a hold over a woman in what she imagined Jean's position to be, and to gain this power she was ready to go any length.

"It is very annoying," she said, petulantly. "I am so thoroughly convinced myself that there is something wrong about the woman, but I can't threaten her with exposure unless I have proof of something to expose."

She impatiently crumpled and ran over the documents in the case: the half-sheet with the signatures; Major Limber's notes from the hotel register, from the Landed Gentry, and from the *Times*. The last she re-read with an air of perplexity.

"Eustace St. George Grandison, R. I. P. What on earth does that mean?"

"*Requiescat in pace;* he or his family must be Catholics," replied Major Limber, whose hereditary faith sat lightly upon him.

"August 16th, 1879, in the 27th year of his age," she read, musingly. "Much too young for her—she's thirty-seven if she's a day.

What! 1879!" and Lyssa sprang to her feet with sudden energy. "Why, she called herself Harding in 1880, when this man had been dead a year! I told you so. She is an impostor, and we shall expose her, or receive a reward for our silence."

But Major Limber was too dispirited by recent failures to share her elation. "It was probably a secret marriage," he said, in a resigned tone. "He was just the sort of fellow to do it. And *that* may have caused the quarrel with his family."

"Quarrel!" cried Lyssa briskly. "I didn't know of any quarrel. But a secret marriage is discreditable enough, especially if it is not announced until after the husband is dead and can't explain. And his people are much more likely to have quarreled with him for *not* marrying her. Come, this is worth a trip to Dover—and this time I shall go myself."

Accordingly, Mrs. Merriam went to Dover and spent a not unagreeable week at 21 Marine Parade, where she had no difficulty in wiling from Mrs. Steele, not only the complete history of Eustace Grandison's illness and death, but

an account of her subsequent lodger, Miss Harding, to whom "money was as dross, ma'am, —if you'll believe me," and who had been so remarkably interested in all that concerned deceased, that Mrs. Steele in the fullness of her heart had given her his photograph. The curious circumstance of his "sister's" visit, and her strong resemblance to "Miss Harding," threw Mrs. Merriam for a moment into the depths of despair, from which she was rescued by Major Limber's assurance that there *was* a sister. Her hand undoubtedly strengthened by these newly acquired facts, Mrs. Merriam next invited Major Limber to accompany her upon a visit to Temple-Grandison, a show-place in Sussex, where they had the good-fortune to hear a full account of the quarrel, originating in Eustace's secession from the church of his fathers, and also to see, at a considerable distance, "Rose Aileen Ormond, only daughter and sole heiress of Everard Temple, etc.," and to recognize for themselves in the slight, sad, dark-featured girl, sufficient resemblance to Jean's mature beauty to form a foundation for Mrs. Steele's romantic conjectures.

Another brief excursion, not trying to old sailors like these, across the channel to Calais, revealed the fact that the lady who had quitted Marine Parade on the morning of August 16th, 1880, as Jane Harding, had arrived in Calais some two hours later as "Mrs. E. St. George Grandison," and had so inscribed herself on the register of the hotel.

And with this piece of evidence Mrs. Merriam declared herself content. "It is not absolutely conclusive," she said "but we may find out something more in America; and at all events I am now satisfied that there is *something* queer about it, whether secret marriage or no marriage at all; and with what we may be able to pick up here and there, I feel sure we shall give Mrs. Yorke—is that her present name?—something of a fright."

CHAPTER XXVI.

"For truth is stronger than a lie,
And righteousness than wrong."

MEANWHILE, the first summer of Jean's married life had passed in idyllic fashion; her social ambitions for the moment forgotten, her morbid self-contemplation put aside, she was for a time supremely, perfectly happy.

What Colonel Yorke had so boldly asserted of himself, Jean on her part felt to be literally true, namely: that he was "the other half of her soul."

She loved with utter, unreserved devotion, the pent-up passion and tenderness of her repressed girlhood lavishing itself on the choice of her womanhood.

Jean was not of the women who can love blindly, closing her eyes to faults and follies; and she rejoiced in each day's conviction of Keppel Yorke's worth, each day's added proof

that his love was of the noble sort which blesses him that gives and her that takes.

For this, then, this complete, intense and full existence, this happiness which seemed so natural and so wonderful, Jean felt that she had been born. It is a very common feeling, most people accepting happiness and prosperity as their due, and falling out with fate as if life's little contrarieties and great sorrows had fallen to their lot quite by mistake.

Jean now felt that she had attained; that henceforth, all things being as she had planned them from her youth, no further change was to come, and all she had to do was to enjoy life. Under this impression it was easy for her to make her husband happy, responding to all his demands with the best that was in her.

And Yorke *was* happy—as happy as any man is likely to be after he is forty years old. No deeper, truer, fonder love was ever given to woman than he now, in the maturity of his manhood, bestowed on Jean; but the days of dreams come true were over for him, and in all his happiness there was an undertone of disappointment.

And now, from out her very happiness, came the first shock to Jean's utter self-satisfaction; now, for the first time in her life, she began to think; for the morbid broodings, in which she stood alone, with a world of imagined enemies arrayed against her, were not worthy the name of thought. Now an added insight, justice, reason, mingled for the first time with her reflections; her husband's character, which she studied with loving scrutiny as it unfolded itself before her, taught her new standards, awoke in her new ideals. It can hardly be said that her conscience awoke in her—rather that she slowly began to acquire a conscience; feeling first an uneasy consciousness of her secret—a growing regret, a wild desire to be freed from it. She began to weigh her conduct in the light of her husband's upright judgment, to see the "harmless deception" as he would see it; she trembled lest he should learn that she had deceived him, yet longed unspeakably for courage to tell him all. And so began to torment herself with fancied changes in his manner, coldness and distrust replacing the first fervor of his devotion; dawning suspicion in the

eyes which studied her with such loving intentness.

Himself absolutely straightforward, and of a nature singularly direct and serene, Colonel Yorke was perfectly unsuspicious. That the woman he loved could do wrong was inconceivable to him; that Jean, in living with whom he each day found some new trait to love, who grew, day by day, more responsive, sweeter, dearer, more entirely his own—that she should have deceived him in the lightest thing was as incredible and monstrous as to suspect her of mere vulgar infidelity. Yet, deep down in his consciousness, was a tiny pin-prick of unacknowledged disappointment. When they had been first engaged he had expected her to allude, of her own motion, to the man who had been not only her husband, but his friend. But she had never spoken of him, and Yorke had waited, fancying, when they were married, the confidence would come. They were married, still she was silent, and still he possessed his soul in patience through those first days of married life when so many reserves are cast aside, so many still exist;

where there is a shyness born of newness, combating the instinct to reveal the innermost core of the heart.

"By and by," he thought, "when we are more truly one, she will know that I have no jealousy in my heart, and the confidence will come."

No faintest trace of his disappointment appeared in his face, nor did Jean reveal, even to his eyes, the gnawing anxiety which began to possess her, remaining outwardly serene as always.

But what she was successful in concealing from her husband's loving watchfulness, other eyes discovered. In Kooystra's presence, Jean relaxed the well-kept guard over her features, and the shadow which had fallen upon her was plain to the young man, who watched her with dog-like devotion. The comparison is perhaps inapt; it may be questioned whether dogs ever find themselves precisely in Kooystra's position, of loving ardently some one of whom they disapprove, their love seeming generally to be blindly given, without much reference to the

worth of the object. In the relation between dog and man it seems probable that "Brutus" (man) is ever "Cæsar's angel," and yet, who can say whether Brutus is not loved in spite of his faults, and not in ignorance of them. Speculation is idle as to what goes on in the doggish minds which look out at us with such wistful, kindly glances; but with some dogs the conviction is irresistible that here is a kind soul, of deeper knowledge and insight, of truer and sounder philosophy than ours, loving us in spite of our meanness and falsity and fickleness, and taking comfort in the thought that we shall, in some future four-footed existence, be given time and opportunity to become as loyal, as loving and faithful as they.

Kooystra's attachment, then, was dog-like, at least in its constancy, and though he felt himself a cur for doubting her—yet the doubts would recur. He was unmanned, idle, broken, doing no work, letting one miserable day drift after the other, only longing to be near Jean.

An unuttered attachment may be permitted to exist, where one declared must be banished, so he could see Jean often, torturing himself in

her presence, first by her happiness, and then by the shadow of sorrow which he saw creeping over her face. In her presence, despising himself for his idleness and promising himself to amend—in her absence, feverishly anxious to be with her again, and falling, inert, into his old habit of bitter dreaming.

The summer had gone by, and only in October had Colonel and Mrs. Yorke returned to the Newport Manycotes; the first breath of winter had come before they yielded to the necessity of providing for themselves a city home. It was the middle of November, when Yorke, parting from Jean for the first time since their marriage, left her alone at Manycotes. Jean wrote immediately to beg a visit from Sylvia, but Sylvia could not now be long away from Mrs. Wyndham, whose health was rapidly failing, and could only promise a stay of a single night, followed by a flying visit from Forbes when he came to escort her home on the following day. On the morning of the day on which Sylvia was expected, the following letter was placed in Jean's hand:

NOV. 12TH, 18—.

MY DEAR MRS. YORKE:—This letter will scarcely have reached you when I too shall be with you, but still it must be written, for I am so unhappy, and it is so much easier to write than to speak. It seems strange, wrong, inconceivable, that I should turn to you—but you know my secret—my mother is so ill, I dare not add a featherweight to her burthen. You are the one whom, next to my mother, I love and honor—to whom my heart turns in joy and sorrow. My love for you did not change when the man I cared for chose you. You are too noble, dear friend, for jealousy. You have proved yourself above every thing petty and ignoble. And indeed, there is nothing for you to fear. No hint of disloyalty enters into the feeling I now have for your husband. That I *did* love him you know, but believe me I have conquered myself too truly for you to distrust me. *That* is not my trouble now. I have taken your advice. I have turned again to my art, "the tender mistress," as you once told me, whom neglect does not estrange. I have won back my first ardor, my right hand has regained its cunning, I *am* happy when I work. But I am not *free*. The sense of bondage grows upon me. I can not tell how I drifted into my engagement—it was a mad folly. No!

what a nonsensical phrase to apply to any thing so indifferent, so commonplace. I wrote a foolish letter which was misunderstood. I was unhappy and Ian loved me very dearly; such love is sweet to a sore heart. I could not bear to grieve him by telling him he had misinterpreted my letter, and I found myself committed before I realized it. You will scorn me for my weakness, but few women are so nobly planned as you; so securely placed above all deceit and falsity. Do not despise me—help me—tell me—what shall I do? Ian is so good, it breaks my heart to pain him, yet is it not wrong, untrue, unfair, to marry a man whom I do not love with my whole heart, even though that heart is swept clear of the least remembrance of another whom you know worthy of all love? Dear Mrs. Yorke, dear friend, we shall have but a few hours together; counsel me, tell me what to do.

Your loving, troubled
SYLVIA.

Jean dropped the letter with a bitter sigh; her heart ached for Sylvia's trouble, but she felt more keenly the unconscious reproach in the girl's sad little appeal. What were Sylvia's simple griefs, the light deceit her pure con-

science magnified to a sin, compared with the lie she was living? *She* noble, *she* worthy! Jean felt herself crushed by the sudden revelation of how unworthy, how base she really was. Truth had never seemed so desirable, falsehood so detestable as now, when in reading Sylvia's estimate of her, she felt how fatally she lacked every noble quality the girl loved her for. It was the sharpest reproach, the keenest thing—how would Sylvia regard her if she knew, and how—oh! much worse, how would her husband look upon the "harmless deception"; she started up and paced the room in a sort of frenzy; flung the window wide, but the rushing wind and damp air suffocated her, and she turned to escape, as always, out of doors, when Sylvia entered. "Sylvia!" she cried, clasping the girl's cold hands. "Tell him the truth—now—here. However hard it may be, do not deceive him any longer, for my sake, for your own—for *any* sake, tell him the truth."

CHAPTER XXVII.

"What is truth? A staff rejected."

THE small practicalities of every-day life which so constantly intrude to mar heroics were not wanting now. For after Sylvia, spurred on by Jean's passionate apostrophe to the only thing she felt was right, had, in the kindest words, told Forbes her story, after a trying interview which left her unnerved and sore with pity—but free—she awoke to the awkward fact that she had lost her escort. Sylvia had not Jean's self-reliant strain; a life of much petting and observance had made her very dependent, and it was with a sort of serio-comic dismay that she contemplated the long railway journey now to be taken alone. For Forbes, though too generous for reproaches or bitter feeling, was as nearly heart-broken as is possible for a young man of this nineteenth Christian century, and, unable for the moment

to keep up appearances, he had uttered a choked and dismal farewell and rushed away by the first boat.

"Never mind," said Jean, in reply to Sylvia's distressed appeal. "Paul Kooystra is going to town to-morrow; your mother will not object to your going with him? If you think she will I can send my maid."

But Sylvia was perfectly satisfied with the idea of Kooystra's companionship, and Jean, having made a statement entirely unwarranted by the facts, in the full conviction that her will was Kooystra's law, now sent him a hasty warning "to make it so."

"I have undertaken for you, that you will escort Miss Wyndham to town to-morrow morning, but pray let her think that you had meant to go, otherwise I fear she will refuse to trouble you."

Kooystra read, with a sigh for two lost days of the sea, but never dreamed of disobeying, and Jean was once more alone with her thoughts, her happiness or unhappiness, whichever it was, and her dreams of Yorke's return.

Her enthusiasm for truth had somewhat

abated; the little germ of conscience had put forth but a feeble sprout; there had been nothing very encouraging in the suffering she had seen inflicted and endured by Sylvia, and she had fallen back into the comfortable belief that things were best as they were. Endless complications might arise were she to undertake what she now called an explanation. Much as she loved Yorke, she was obliged to confess she did not altogether understand him; she could not judge how he would receive it; he had odd ideas of truth and honor. They were perfectly happy as they were; why disturb their lives by a revelation which nothing but her voluntary act could bring about? She had not been curious about his past life—a fact upon which she rather plumed herself, and though she held the usual creed, that "it was different with a woman," yet hers was such an innocent secret! That her husband might not receive her account with implicit faith; might suspect weightier reasons than she could give for her deception, was another argument for silence in a matter to which she believed no one held the clew.

The only person in her old life sufficiently interested in her affairs, namely, Mr. Sandman, had made no effort to trace her; no one else knew enough of her past to be even passively dangerous, and active enemies—she fancied she had none. So Jean once more lulled herself into fancied security, enjoying her husband's constant loving letters, riding and walking, content and at ease, in the company of Loki and Bor; and if now there was something lacking in her life which could only be supplied by one presence, dwelling in anticipation on the delight of reunion.

By one of the coincidences upon which critics of fiction are so severe, but which in real life are constantly recurrent, Mr. Sandman had about this time concluded a delightful European holiday by the pleasantest autumn voyage which had ever fallen to his lot. Ship, weather and company had all been perfection, and he had endeavored to repay the attentions of an especially charming widow by exerting all his powers of anecdote and reminiscence for her benefit. It was scarcely by chance, since it was the uppermost thought in Mrs. Merriam's

mind—that the name of Harding was mentioned between them; but it was marvelous good luck for that clever little lady, that he possessed knowledge which enabled her to complete and verify her various data, while appearing merely to be interested in an indifferent way in a curious case. She learned enough of Jane Harding's early life, of her mother's death, of the years spent in America under Mr. Sandman's eye, to settle definitely—by a brief comparison with certain chronological notes which Major Limber had made of Grandison's career, that the only date at which Jane and Eustace could have met, namely, in 1869, was such as to have made a genuine marriage with him impossible or disgraceful on account of his extreme youth. Which of the two Mrs. Merriam did not greatly care. Even the little incident of the maid Annie's abrupt return to America, leaving Jean at Folkestone, which Mr. Sandman told as the sequel of an odd affair of mysterious disappearance, came to Lyssa's mind with tremendous significance. And not to leave her work in any way incomplete, Mrs. Merriam on another day—Major Limber effacing himself

for the voyage—in pursuing a far different vein of talk, got out of the reticent lawyer his opinion that a woman marrying under a false name, though really married, was in a precarious position, since "the man could get out of it if he wanted to." This was enough. Lyssa felt herself strong for battle, and the ship arriving at the end of the second week in November, it followed that the night-boat, which took Kooystra back to Newport after his sudden trip with Sylvia, conveyed also Mrs. Merriam and Major Limber, prepared to open their campaign.

One brief glance of recognition passed between Kooystra and Limber, involuntary on Paul's part, but followed up promptly by the Major, who approached him as he stood in the lee of the smoke-stack to say, in a tone from which he could scarcely banish his exultation:

"M. Kooystra, you challenged me once in a certain matter to *produce my proofs*. Those proofs I now hold, and I assure you I propose to use them without scruple and without mercy."

Kooystra looked him over with cool inso-

lence, and made no reply; Limber, who was under orders to be peaceable, having said his somewhat indiscreet say, turned on his heel and left him. There was but one thing to which he could allude, and Kooystra recalled with vivid distinctness the scene at Lady Fenimore's, the gossip, the *esclandre*, Jean's disappearance and his own miserable doubts. His love awoke, armed at all points to defend her against others, vulnerable only to the thrust of his own distrust, the keen pang of feeling that all was not true and clear as crystal about Jean Yorke, the woman for whom, unsuspected, unrewarded, unacknowledged, he was wasting and wrecking his life. He paced the deck all night, but no calmness of resolve followed the tumult of thought, and it was with a feeling of desperate daring that he used his privelege of *ami de la maison*, to call at Manycotes in the early morning of his return, and warn her of he knew not what.

Jean was smiling, content and happy; she was in her habit, just in from a glorious gallop along the hard, wet sands, her cheeks flushed, her eyes glowing; Yorke's letter, announcing

his return on the next day but one, held in caressing fingers, while she talked gayly and affectionately to Paul. Sylvia was scarcely alluded to; every thing disagreeable was ignored; they seemed in such an atmosphere of peace and serenity Kooystra could not bring himself to believe in any danger. Limber was a notorious liar; it must have been a mere blackmailing threat; but why addressed to him? Why warn Jean, and of what? Yet something seemed to impel him to try.

"Have you any reason," he said, at last, abruptly yet with effort, "can you—pardon me, Mrs. Yorke. What I am going to say is so odd, you will think me impertinent to the last degree. But have you any reason to fear Major Limber?"

There was a mere instant's silence, while a sickening terror contracted Jean's heart; for just a breath's space she wore the wild, hunted look of the Valkyr picture, and before she spoke Kooystra was conscious of a whimsically irrelevant pleasure in having read her aright. "I knew she could look it," flashed through his mind. And then Jean was her-

self again, lifting untroubled eyes to his, and answering, with a wondering smile:

"I? No. I scarcely know Major Limber. What could I possibly have to fear from him?"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"Each lip must learn the taste of truth."

IF Kooystra, on quitting Jean, found himself dismayed and unnerved, it was far otherwise with Jean. After that brief instant of panic, in which her secret stirred within her like some living thing, and a terrible possibility had risen up to confront her, self-possession, self-confidence and an easy incredulity had come back to her. She reviewed the situation quietly, estimating this or that element in her favor or to her detriment at its full worth. She recalled Major Limber's conduct upon every occasion when he had crossed her path, and while she acknowledged him as venomous as any serpent, she fancied, from her belief as to his habits and aims, that his poison was innocuous, his fangs readily drawn. "Proofs, he can have none," she thought, "and whatever he may suspect, and choose to assert, the word of a man of his standing will weigh but

little against mine. Mrs. Keppel Yorke can afford to ignore the insinuations of a Major Limber."

And so, while Kooystra sat, puzzled and disheartened, his doubts half confirmed, searching the face in the portrait for the secret the face of flesh had so nearly revealed, Jean was making a careful toilette, promising herself a pleasant afternoon over a new novel, and dwelling now and then on the thought of her husband's return on the morrow as the rose-leaf on her brimming cup of happiness. It was with complete cheerfulness that at four o'clock, the lamps having been lit and the fire replenished, Jean, seated in the cheery glow, received the card of a visitor whose vehicle had just drawn up under the carriage-porch in the dusk.

"Mrs. Merriam," she read. "I don't know any *Mrs.* Merriam. One of the inhabitants, I suppose, come about a subscription. I will come, Grant," she concluded. "Or stay," she added, glancing around her with a sudden sense of *bien-etre* in her surroundings, "show the lady in here, and bring tea."

Mrs. Merriam and the tea made an almost simultaneous appearance, for these details were well-ordered at Manycotes. The lady was well dressed; beside the laces and frills and jewels of Jean's rather elaborate dinner-dress, she was ostentatiously simple; yet Jean, as she poured out the tea and uttered such commonplaces as she could conjure up to address to a stranger, thought to herself "she is not *des notres*."

Mrs. Merriam, on her part, looked at Jean attentively, estimating her force of character, conjecturing her possible conduct. She had a private purpose to serve, a private grudge to gratify, of which Major Limber knew nothing —a weapon too keen of edge to be trusted in his clumsy hands.

"I shall not detain you very long, Mrs. —— Ah—Mrs. Yorke," began Lyssa; "you know my friend Major Limber, I believe?"

"I have not that honor," said Jean frigidly, and instantly upon her guard.

"No?" said Mrs. Merriam. "Major Limber knows you, however, and remembers you very well. You have given him excellent cause, on

several occasions, to remember you, and he has a very clear idea of your identity."

The faintest perceptible stress was laid upon this last word, but if it had any effect upon Jean, the flicker of the fire and the flattering light of the lamps concealed it.

"Yes," went on Lyssa, in her soft throaty voice, "Major Limber knows you very well. He remembers, what you may have forgotten, crossing the ocean with you in the steamer Servia in 1880, when you were still Miss Harding. He knows that in July of the same year you lodged at Mrs. Steele's, 21 Marine Parade, Dover—still under the name of Miss Harding. He knows that on the same day on which you left Dover, you registered at an hotel in Calais, in the name of a man *who had been dead a year*. He knows that in August, 1880, you were at the hotel Louis-le-Grand in Paris, where he found *this*," and she unfolded the worn bit of paper on which Jean recognized her own experimental signatures. "He knows that only in 1881 were the houses bought which you represented as a legacy from the man whose name you took, and to whose family

you are unknown. He knows, in short, a very great deal which your husband—if Colonel Yorke *is* your husband, you having married him under a false name—does *not* know, but which he would, no doubt, learn with much interest."

The length of this carefully prepared speech, which Jean had forborne to interrupt, had given her time to collect herself. Her courage, which before the phantom foes of her own brain had so often betrayed her, was cool and ready in the presence of a flesh-and-blood accuser.

"My good woman," she said, choosing instinctively the tone most calculated to gall and exasperate. "Suppose Major Limber does know all these things—which I do not doubt, since you tell me so—why should you proclaim it in so threatening a tone? Even if Major Limber knew every detail of my first marriage, I fail to see what interest *his* relation of the facts could have for my husband, Colonel Yorke, save that of a twice-told tale."

It was a bold stroke, and for a second Lyssa Merriam sat dazed with the possibility of a secret marriage having really taken place and

been confessed to Colonel Yorke. Without Mr. Sandman's information, this might have influenced her; but as it was, she cast one swift backward glance over her array of dates and circumstances and slowly shook her pretty head.

"Suppose there had been a secret marriage, my dear Mrs. Yorke," she said calmly, "which you and I know there was *not*—even that is a thing which can not be done without a certain shadow of—well, *blame*, falling upon the woman, especially when the woman is much older than the man. With men it is different. Their future is unaffected by the youthful follies of their past—they are said to have 'behaved badly' to such and such a woman—but some other woman likes and marries them all the same. And that is why I have come to you with my knowledge of your secret. A man's secret, unless it is a criminal one, is of little value, and the letters I have here, which contain the history of *my* brief engagement to Colonel Yorke, are worth little more than the paper upon which they are written, whereas this other half sheet of paper——"

A sparkle of malevolence came into Lyssa's eyes; now for the first time she saw a treacherous whiteness invade Jean's cheek.

"With you it is different," she went on quickly; "whether you made a secret marriage, or whether, which is most likely, you have never been married at all, is of little practical consequence. The only question is, what are you willing to do to insure silence on my part, and on Major Limber's."

Lyssa rose, all her jetted garments tinkling and flashing in the firelight. "I do not wish to press you, Mrs. Yorke, there is plenty of time to decide. I shall take no steps for a few days and in the meantime we shall, I am sure, be very good friends. I shall have the pleasure of seeing you to-morrow."

Mechanically Jean put out her hand to the bell which summoned a servant to open Mrs. Merriam's carriage door; mechanically went to her dinner-table and observed its forms; like an automaton returned to the library and sank into her lounging chair with her novel open in her hand. Silent, motionless, absorbed, she sat, the hours going by with the swiftness lent

them by a chiming clock with musical quarters. The fire put out little mocking tongues of flame at her which seemed to sear her brain; no, her brain itself seemed all aflame—thought was impossible to her—every faculty seemed merged in the over-mastering desire for air. She flung the window wide, rang violently, and said to the sedate man-servant who met her as she rushed past him on the stairs:

"Tell them to saddle Loki."

CHAPTER XXIX.

"He that trusts in a lie shall perish in the truth."

THE night was windless and overcast; there was a moon, and so the air was full of a strange gray light, in spite of the dark cloud-rack which hurried onward on some fierce blast far up the sky; and beside the soft, velvety lapping of the black water on the rocks below the cliff, the hoarse distant murmur of the groundswell came faintly to an attentive ear.

Jean paused as she came down the stairway, turning back for some small object which she slipped into her bosom, then passed quietly out to where Loki stood, gleaming ghost-like under the dark carriage porch, with Bor at her stirrup.

Long indifference to the opinion of her servants had taught them at least outward indifference too, and it was with an unmoved face that Girth, at ten o'clock of a November

night, adjusted his mistress' stirrup, laid careful feeling fingers on Loki's bit and headstall, and asked in his usual tone:

"Shall you require me, madam?"

It was with a feeling of sincere relief that he received her brief negative and led his saddled horse back to the stables, while Loki, with two tremendous bounds, fled whitely out of the gate and away.

Now, with the still air, fanned into movement by her speed, rushing by her cheek, Jean's brain awoke; now she began to think; now a wild terror possessed her, from which, gallop as she might, there was no escape. While she had fancied her secret her own, to tell or to keep, she had been able to control herself, to reason herself into deceitful calm—even to contemplate the revealing of it as a commonplace, and more or less probable thing. While Lyssa faced her, a palpable foe, she had been able to hold her own; but now, alone, and in the night, her strange, unbalanced nature betrayed her. Every threat, every thought of harm, every wildest imagining of evil to come, took shape, and rose up clamor-

ing before her. She saw herself despised by the man she loved when once he should learn the extent of the deceit she had practiced upon him. Could Yorke, frank and loyal, ever forgive, not the mere concealment toward himself, but the whole hateful scheme, the lie she had lived, the false seeming to which she had lent herself so gratuitously? Jean's one moment of weakness, could Lyssa have known it, was due, not to the mere fact of Yorke's engagement, the history of which she had long known, but to the sudden knowledge that Lyssa had been the heroine of his early dreams.

Could Sylvia, whose tender conscience had so suffered over a slight concealment, could she help but scorn the woman who had imposed upon her from the first?

Kooystra, Forbes, Mrs. Wyndham—all the people whose respect and affection she valued, pale, scornful faces of them all, rose up before her on the night, and she uttered low, choking cries as she rode.

But all this was as nothing to the thought of Yorke, not estranged, but undeceived,

enlightened; finding, in place of the woman he had counted his soul's mate, a mere hollow simulacrum of a woman, false, perjured, untrue, not even, perhaps, his wife. And the doubt which Lyssa, well knowing its falsity, had so cleverly and boldly insinuated, now added its small pipe to all the other fiendish voices which were shrieking their maddening suggestions in her ears. For Jean, in her Sintram moods, there was no saintly exorcism ready. In this, her extremity, she had no sanctuary, no hope, no help, to which to turn. That saddest negation of all faith, the indifferentism which goes to church—occasionally—because other people do; which has many pleasant thoughts, wholly unconnected with worship, to fill up contentedly the two hours vouchsafed to custom; which criticises the singing and the dresses; and which looks for, nor comprehends, no deeper meaning, no real thing under the outward show, was all Jean had of religion. No "honest doubt" had perplexed her, for she had simply not thought at all upon the subject; and now, at the sharpest strait of her life, she only realized what it is to

be without God in the world, by the awful void and immensity of formless horror into which she looked, seeking vainly a way of escape. Could she have believed in aught or naught, had she had firm conviction even of the "first dark day of nothingness" which some can persuade themselves lies the other side of death's silences; had not doubts and fears risen thick and grisly along *that* path when it opened before her, Jean's struggle might have been sooner over. All the devils in hell were with her, she thought, in that mad ride; led, as it seemed to her, by one more horrible than the rest, who whispered over and over and over, "Tell the truth." And Jean, who had not learned that it is not devils alone who come in various disguise, fled from this dark-visaged angel, whose pleadings might have saved her even now, as she might from the most hideous and devilish of the crew.

The night was waning. Loki, ridden beyond even her glorious strength, stumbled now, and clambered wearily up dark hillsides among the stones; the wind moaned, but not among trees, and the surf was running mad

riot on the rocks. What subtle taint of madness lurked in Jean's blood had done its work; the mind which had made the worst of every thing now faced what seemed irremediable; the will which had so often turned from the direct way, chose once more. Jean's hand sought something in her bosom, carried some tiny thing to her lips; she swayed once or twice in her saddle ere she fell, and wearied Loki, turning, touched her cheeks with gentle sniffs of inquiry, as she lay silent, and stood over her, motionless as she.

It was Kooystra who at last found her, far on in the day, as he rode wildly along a rough road between bare stony fields, high and desolate spaces, swept by winds that blew from bay and ocean. A long howl and a distant neigh which his horse answered attracted his attention; Loki's stable-companion went lightly over the walls, crying upon her as he leaped; and so Kooystra found Jean, the rein still clasped in her stiffened hand, gentle Loki standing patiently over her and Bor crouched moaning at her side. Something glittering

and very small, lay where it had fallen from her hand, and this Kooystra, recognizing as the box he had given her, took up silently and hid.

CHAPTER XXX.

"Tarry a little, there is something more."

ALWAYS something more. Lives end, with which the light of other lives goes out. Lives end, which to the souls which once informed them, seemed endlessly full of power to do and to achieve. Lives end, which it is said, the whole world misses and mourns. And yet there remains a whole world full of people, of whom many stories may be told.

And so poor Jean, having learned the beauty and value of truth only at the last, left lives behind her to live themselves out: each after their own fashion and meaning. A certain pair of schemers, whose subtilty had somewhat overreached itself, now bitterly regretted not naming their price, which would have seemed so little to Jean; instead of uttering vague threats which had driven her to her death. And it was not in malevolence, but simply "in justice to themselves," that they now informed

Colonel Yorke "while he still cared enough about her," as Lyssa said, to wish to protect her memory, of certain facts in their possession, for silence as to which, he was willing to make them a generous gift.

Before they went Kooystra heard from Major Limber's lips that which added one pang more to his abiding sorrow; namely, that his picture had given them the clew to Jean's identity. To this, and to the thought that from his hand, however innocently, had come the means of ending Jean's life, was due a brooding melancholy, a useless, purposeless life; and except that we are told on the best authority, that "men have died and worms have eaten them, *but not for love*," we might reasonably attribute to that cause this wasted life and early death.

Ian Forbes, perhaps, was made of sterner stuff; something more elastic composed the organ he called "heart," which presently began to beat again, rebounding, rubber-like, at the behest of a pretty and tolerably young girl, curiously expert in adapting herself to her surroundings, and who presently surrendered the

name and style of Miss Sadie Randolph for that of the artist's wife, Mrs. Ian Forbes.

It was a great relief to Sylvia, who had carried Ian's somewhat demonstrative suffering on her tender conscience longer than needful, and who, happy and successful in her art, was grown graver and even sweeter than of old.

One day, several years having gone by, Keppel Yorke, taking courage to look over some of Jean's papers, found in an envelope, dated November 15th, 1883, and addressed to himself, that last letter she had received from Sylvia.

It revealed many things to him. The identity of the woman for whom Jean had wished to sacrifice herself; the best of Jean's strange, wild, perverted nature; a certain hidden corner of his heart in which, half-suspected, Sylvia had always nestled; and, after much hesitation and many misgivings, a way to the pleasant lingering place where he might yet find love, content, peace. But, as the whole truth is seldom known to any one mortal, it could not tell him the real story of the woman who had so erred, groping blindly, without guide, among the perplexities of this life.

THE END.

University of California
SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
405 Hilgard Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90024-1388
Return this material to the library
from which it was borrowed.

NON-RENEWABLE

MAY 07 1991
ILL/ BAT

DUE 2 WKS FROM DATE RECEIVED
REC'D LD-URL

JUN 18 1991

A 000 031 385 8

University of Cali
Southern Regio
Library Facili